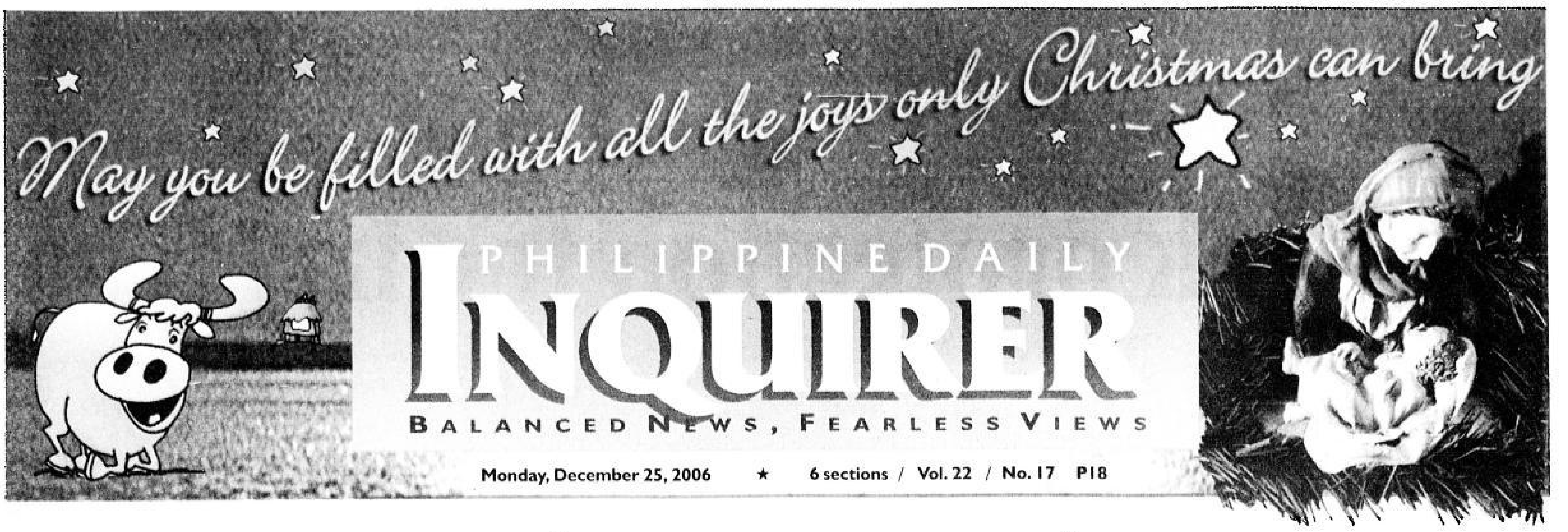
May you be filled with all the joys only Christmas can bring

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Monday, December 25, 2006 ★ 6 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 17 P18

Family of slain solon vows to get Valera

Garcillano hopes DOJ ruling will end scandal

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE MAN AT THE CENTER OF suspicions that President Macapagal-Arroyo stole the vote in the 2004 polls hopes that the dismissal by the Department of Justice of the perjury and falsification charges lodged against him by opposition lawmakers will finally bury the ghost of the controversial 2004 presidential election.

"*Sana matapos na* (I hope this will end)," former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano told the INQUIRER when reached by phone yesterday at his farm in Baungon, Bukidnon.

Garcillano is widely believed to be the man with whom Ms Arroyo was speaking in tapped phone conversations during the 2004 election period.

The conversations triggered accusations of poll fraud that almost brought down Ms Arroyo's administration and that continue to hound her.

Garcillano refused to comment further beyond saying that the DOJ order was long overdue.

But the dismissal of charges against Garcillano did not surprise Sen. Panfilo Lacson and Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr.

GARCILLANO/ A6

MAS MALAKI
PAG NAKA-VIDEO!

People tend to give more when observed

SAN FRANCISCO—CHRISTMAS may be the season of goodwill and a time to help the needy, but a new study has found that people are conspicuously more generous in giving when observed by others.

"You see this a lot around the holidays within families and social networks," said Robb Willer, author of the study and professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley.

"Of course, we do not want to demystify the season of gift-giving because we all like to pretend the act is absolutely sincere and not self-interested," he explained.

PEOPLE/ A8

Palace to CA: Turn over Smith to US

By Christine O. Avendaño and TJ Burgonio

AS US OFFICIALS ANNOUNCED on Friday the scrapping of next year's RP-US war games as a result of the custody dispute over Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, Malacañang was again moving to convince the Court of Appeals why it should allow the Marine's return to American custody.

But the "very urgent manifestation and motion" of the Office of the Solicitor General, which was representing the Department

PALACE/ A8

THE LATE Sen. Blas Ople's daughter, Susan, fits a shoe for a public school pupil in Hagonoy, Bulacan. EDWIN BACASMAS

Poor Bulacan pupils wear Ople's Shoes

By Volt Contreras

SOME OF THE POOREST schoolchildren in Bulacan are wearing new shoes this Christmas, gifts in memory of a late statesman who, in his teenage years, could not afford to buy his own pair.

As they received their presents, the children were told of an anecdote in the life of the young Blas F. Ople, which took place years before this native Bulakeño became an esteemed man of letters, labor minister, senator and diplomat.

Ka Blas had to borrow a pair of shoes from a relative on the day he was to deliver a speech as valedictorian of his high school class in March 1941.

"I still vividly recall my own graduation right in the plaza of my hometown, Hagonoy," Ople wrote in a 1993 newspaper column. "It was the first time ever that I gave a formal speech … which I had composed with great care and committed to memory.

"It must have been a flawless delivery. But what the audience, including my classmates, did not know, was that I was wearing ill-fitting leather shoes borrowed for the occasion from an

POOR/ A6

TUBBATAHA Reef park rangers enjoy a work-and-leisure dive in the World Heritage site. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TUBBATAHA MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Extra special Christmas for park rangers

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—TWENTY-seven-year-old Victor Calderon Jr. is making sure this Christmas will be extra special.

He took his wife Mylene and year-old daughter to the remote town of Taytay in Palawan for a family reunion. He also bought dolls, dresses, hair clips and toys for his godchildren.

He planned to make this celebration far merrier than last year, when he spent Christmas staring at the spectacular Sulu Sea, swimming with marine animals of different sizes and shapes.

For Calderon and his fellow park rangers, protecting the Tubbataha Reef means spending the holidays away from their families.

Located at the heart of the Sulu Sea, the Tubbataha Reef is the largest offshore in the country. It is home to 396 species of corals, or half of all the coral species in the world, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature. In 1993, it was made one of nine protected

EXTRA/ A6

Bersamin daughter belies claim of governor

By Frank Cimatu and Leoncio Balbin Jr.
Inquirer Northern Luzon
and Alcuin Papa
in Manila

BANGUED, ABRA—"HIS statements are all lies."

This was the reaction yesterday of Charrie Bersamin, eldest daughter of murdered Rep. Luis "Chito" Bersamin Jr., to the statement of Abra Gov. Vicente Valera denying allegations that he masterminded the slaying in Quezon City on Dec. 16.

The daughter said her family would spend its last peso to pin down Valera for her father's murder, as well as that of other opposition leaders in the province.

"Whatever I get as inheritance, I will use it to prosecute him to the hilt," she said in Filipino. "I will use all my money so that they, too, will lose their money defending themselves."

In an exclusive interview with the INQUIRER somewhere in Metro Manila, Valera dismissed claims that he was the brains behind the killing of Bersamin, 62, and his police escort, Adelfo Ortega, 49, outside the Mt. Carmel Church in Quezon City after attending the wedding of the lawmaker's niece last week.

Valera, 61, said he was "a victim of a vicious and coordinated frame-up" and called on police investigators to look into other angles. He denied he was in hid-

FAMILY/ A8

'Reming' heroes bind 2 widows

By Juan Escandor Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

DARAGA, ALBAY—HAPPY TIMES marred by the tragic death of their husbands bind two women struggling to move on with their lives.

Salvyn Ll. Mandane and Annie Arasain have accepted their loss, but it is hard to shake off the memories.

"It's a most trying time, especially this Christmas," Salvyn told the INQUIRER. "But we must endure."

Salvyn's spouse, Ethelwaldo Mandane, 53, was a former soldier in the defunct PC-INP (Philippine Constabulary-Inte-

'REMING'/ A8

Second FRONT PAGE
E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph
Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Luzon will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. Eastern Mindanao will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: LAW DE GUZMAN, INQUIRER RESEARCH 12/24/06

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Rainy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

5M seek protection for La Mesa

By Norman Bordadora

BANTAY KALIKASAN'S "PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE" to declare the La Mesa watershed a protected area has yielded more than 5 million signatures, Gina Lopez, head of the environmental advocacy group, told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Lopez said the signatures gathered through nationwide consultations in schools and communities represented the extent of public awareness and conviction that the watershed should not be exposed to pollution.

"The five million signatures came from all over the country. If we can't protect the main city's source of drinking water, how can we protect the water source in other parts of the country?" said Lopez, whose wealthy family runs water and electric power utilities.

Lopez said most of the signatures came from the schools visited by Bantay Kalikasan, including 800,000 from the University of Santo Tomas and 500,000 from the Far Eastern University.

She said Caloocan City delivered 700,000 signatures.

"I tell people (in the forums) that I do not need their money. I need them to be educated about the importance of protecting the drinking water of Metro Manila," Lopez said.

"I tell them to go to their families and tell them what they learned (about watershed protection) and come back with more signatures. It doesn't end there. They even go to their respective communities and gather signatures," she added.

Some students, she said, even come back with 200 signatures each.

Bantay Kalikasan mounted the "people's initiative" in conjunction with efforts of other pressure groups in the La Mesa Coalition calling for protection of the watershed after 59 hectares in the area were designated as a housing project for employees of the Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

The groups are "asking the government to exhaust all means to find a just solution to the rights of the awardees/claimants of the 59-ha land, without prejudicing the rights of 12 million Metro Manila residents to clean water."

"This is not meant to pressure Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes in any way. He has always been supportive of our cause," Lopez said.

"(Reyes) just wants his decision to be based on science, not public pressure," she added.

Reyes in May expressed alarm over the potential effects of a residential area in the watershed area. He has since ordered a technical study on the potential environmental issues if a community is put up in the area.

"La Mesa dam is a source of drinking water for Metro Manila. The configuration of the terrain is such that if it (domestic pollutants) drains into the dam, it is dangerous. It must be declared a protected area," Reyes said earlier.

Reyes said the team will determine if the watershed may be declared a protected area.

"If it is a protected area, then you are effectively declaring that it is in the public interest that you don't have establishments, structures there," he said.

Lopez said the coalition wants the declaration that the watershed is a protected area to ensure that future developments will not lead to water pollution.

HURRYING HOME

One of the thousands in Manila taking the last trip to celebrate Christmas in the provinces haul luggage and son on a cart at the domestic airport on Dec. 24. By bus, train, boat or plane Filipinos away from home hurry to rejoin families for the traditional yearend reunion. ARNOLD ALMACEN

4 Filipino peacekeepers survive Haiti ambush

By Nikko Dizon

FOUR FILIPINO PEACEKEEPERS and a ranking UN military official survived unharmed an ambush by unknown gunmen in a violence-prone area in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince on Thursday, the Philippine Mission to the United Nations announced yesterday.

The Filipinos were identified as Army S/Sgt. Abelardo Digma and Eduard Quinones, Marine Cpl. Rous Remogat, and Air Force T/Sgt. Celestino Sonsona.

The Filipinos were with Maj. Gen. Raul Gloodtdofsky of Uruguay, deputy force commander of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), when gunmen peppered their vehicle with bullets in Cite Soleil, the tough neighborhood in the capital.

Digma, Quinones, and Remogat acted as the security escorts of the general and his assistant, while Sonsona drove their vehicle.

The mission said the incident took place at around 4:30 p.m. (5:30 a.m., Friday, Dec. 22 in Manila), shortly after Gloodtdofsky observed manhunt operations by UN peacekeepers in Cite Soleil, which has remained out of UN control.

All were unhurt but the armored Toyota Land Cruiser was riddled with bullets, hitting the windshield, the rear passenger door and side mirror, and the reserve tire, according to a report from Lt. Col. Johnny Bragado, Philippine contingent commander.

"It could have been a different story if their vehicle did not have any armor protection. It is my impression based on the bullet hits on the vehicle, the attackers were shooting to kill and not just to harass or intimidate," Ambassador Lauro Baja Jr., Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN, said in the statement.

Baja praised the Filipino security escorts for their "presence of mind," shielding Gloodtdofsky and his assistant, and Sonsona who "immediately sped out of the ambush zone."

Cite Soleil was the same area where S/Sgt. Antonio Batomalaque was killed in April last year after suspected gang members attacked UN peacekeepers, making him the first Filipino to die in combat in Haiti, the mission said.

The Philippines has nearly 200 military and police personnel serving as peacekeepers in Haiti—155 of them serving as the Force Headquarters Support Unit since MINUSTAH was established in November 2004.

Bicol schools sustain ₱2.5B in damage

By Delma L. Peyra
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—DAMAGE TO school buildings in the entire Bicol region has reached P2.5 billion, according to Department of Education Bicol Regional Director Celedonio Layon Jr.

Layon said P150 million was already available for the immediate repair of school buildings.

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo instructed him by phone to start the rehabilitation work immediately.

Engineers from the DepEd central office arrived here on Tuesday to meet with qualified contractors and to discuss the initial distribution of available funds. Camarines Sur would get the bulk of the funds because of the widespread damage wrought by three successive typhoons to the province.

Layon said the DepEd central office would send 10,600 pieces of canvas, measuring 6 meters by 12 meters each, to serve as temporary roofs for school children while the repair of their schools was ongoing.

He also said he had requested the school boards in the region to use the special education funds of local government units for the repair of school buildings.

PAF lost 55 pilots to commercial aviation in '06

By Nikko Dizon

THE PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE this year lost not only 55 veteran pilots, the biggest number in recent years, but their skills and experience as well, the Air Force chief said yesterday.

"Their resignation doesn't hurt us number-wise, but in experience, that's a big loss in skills. You can't easily replace that," said Lt. Gen. Jose Reyes, Jr., PAF commanding general.

The resigned pilots comprised five percent of the PAF's current roster of a little over 1,000 pilots. Their slots have been taken over by those freshly trained.

Reyes said that the expansion in the international aviation industry and the increasing demand for experienced pilots were factors in the resignation of Air Force veterans.

"It's really about the money and not so much the lack of military planes to fly," Reyes told reporters.

Better pay

Commercial airline pilots receive as much as P80,000 monthly, compared to the basic pay of an Air Force captain who receives some P17,000 monthly.

In India alone, there is a demand for some 10,000 pilots while China needs an estimated 4,000, he said.

Reyes said with veteran commercial pilots leaving to work overseas, local airlines replace them by hiring military pilots.

Pilots of the military cargo plane C-130 are in demand, for example, as they are already familiar with the operation of a wide-bodied aircraft, with airline companies purchasing Airbus 320s and 340s, as well as Boeing 777s, Reyes said.

Military pilots are not prevented from leaving the service as long as they have completed the mandatory eight-year service and go through the process of resignation, he said.

Getting out properly

"It's a matter of getting out of the Air Force properly," Reyes said.

The government spends some P2 million for the training of each pilot.

The final approval of a pilot's resignation is signed by the President as commander in chief and the one who officially appoints them as officers, Reyes said.

Until he retires in February, Reyes vowed to continue going after moonlighting pilots.

The PAF is currently investigating three captains for allegedly moonlighting while three others have faced the general court-martial for going AWOL while training in a commercial airline.

"I hope the next administration will also strictly implement the rules and regulations of the organization for personnel who want to leave the service," Reyes said.

A 'Filipino bookstore' shines in San Francisco

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA—Marie Romero, originally from Baguio City, has a passion for books and Filipino culture.

When the opportunity came to start her own business, she opened Arkipelago, a specialty store selling books on the Philippines, as well as Filipino arts and crafts.

The enterprise, according to Romero, helps her *kababayan* (countrymen) in the United States and Canada nurture their sense of identity as they strive to live in multicultural settings.

While the business name reflects what the Philippines is like physically—a scattering of more than 7,100 islands—Arkipelago describes itself as "The Filipino Bookstore."

Housed in the Bayanihan Community Center on 1010 Mission St., the establishment, in Romero's words, "serves as a resource center for all Filipinos and for those desiring to learn more about the Philippines."

Working with the Filipino diaspora in mind, she has taken the advice of national hero Dr. Jose Rizal to heart: "*Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa kanyang pinanggalingan ay hindi makararating sa kanyang paroroonan* (Those who don't look back will never get to their destination)."

She even had the famous saying printed on her company's handouts and brochures.

"Filipinos feel at home if they are connected to their own culture," she told the INQUIRER on Saturday just before a business meeting with Dawn Mabalon, assistant professor of history at the San Francisco State University and one of the project coordinators of "Remember & Reclaim: A Stockton, California Filipino-American History Calendar."

Arkipelago, which Romero opened in 1998, carries more than 3,000 selections on Filipino architecture, arts and culture, children's books, cookbooks, dance, film, history, literature, martial arts, music, novels, plays, poetry, reference, short stories, social science, theater and visual arts.

The bookstore also facilitates author readings, book distribution, and accepts special book orders. It has a small press, publishing literary works on Filipino-American experiences.

According to Romero, her bookstore thrives in San Francisco, not only because there are some 40,000 Filipinos living there, but also because it is an international city whose residents love to read.

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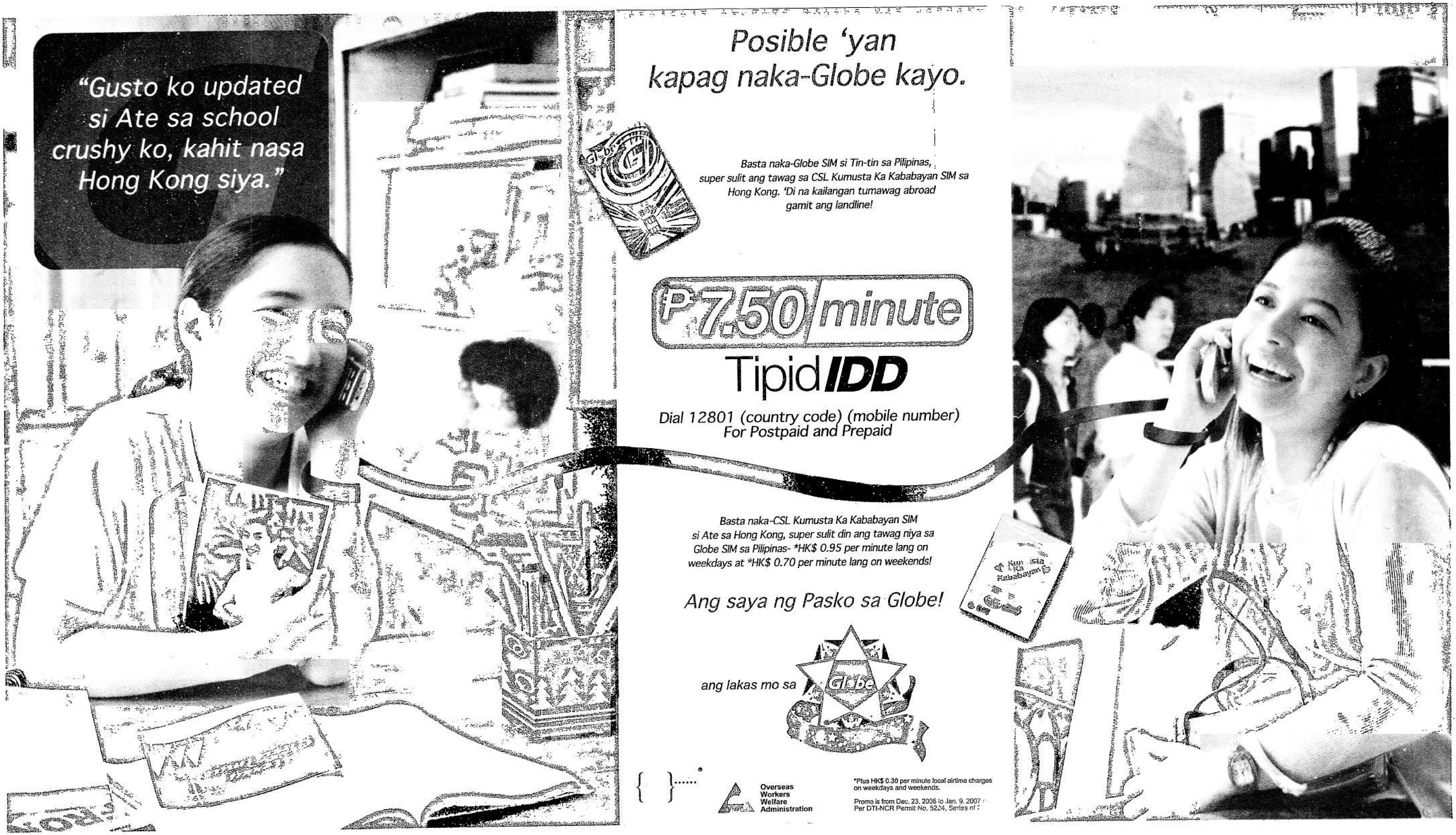

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All systems go (again) for Asean summit

IT'S OFFICIAL: ALL THE leaders of the 15 guest nations are coming to the rescheduled 12th Asean Summit next month for their "Take Two" in Cebu.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said at the weekend the nine other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as well as Asean's six dialogue partners have confirmed attendance, a month after host Philippines postponed the summit because of Typhoon "Seniang."

The leaders' summit proper will be on Jan. 13, 14 and 15, 2007, or after the ministerial meetings to be held on the 11th and 12th, Romulo said in a briefing. The leaders are meeting both for the Asean summit as well as for the adjunct East Asia Summit.

"It's all systems go," he stressed. "Cebu is a beautiful place and it's worth going back there the second time."

The Philippine government came under criticism in and outside the country for resetting the summit, originally slated on Dec. 11-13, because of an approaching storm.

The host drew further flak especially after the storm brought only moderate rain and passed without doing any serious damage in Cebu, save for exposing leaks in the rushed, P500-million Cebu International Convention Center.

Romulo maintained that such criticisms stemmed from "misinformation" or speculations that "a security problem" was really behind the last-minute decision.

"If there were a security problem, I would have been informed (early about it)," said the secretary, who was even upbeat during a press conference at the CICC that was held barely two hours before other hosting officials announced the postponement on Dec. 8. *Volt Contreras*

Asia's Christmas has a unique flavor

DOGS, BATS, KENTUCKY FRIED Chicken and barramundi will grace dinner tables across the Asia-Pacific region this Christmas, a festival celebrated with lots of cheer in this mainly non-Christian region.

Christmas Day is seen as a foreign, Western festival in many Asian countries, but that doesn't stop millions of people from cooking up banquets of local food unheard of in the West.

In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country which also has a substantial Christian community, Christmas feasts include delicacies such as pork soaked in blood and dog meat.

"We usually hold a family gathering at our parents' house or in-laws' house after Christmas eve Mass," said Ermida Simanjuntak, a Christian. "We do not exchange gifts, we use this event more to meet and talk."

On the eastern island of Sulawesi, some Christians swear by "kawok," or garden rats, cooked with chillies and garlic, and "paniki," or bats, cooked in coconut milk.

"Paniki's meat tastes almost the same as kawok but it has more muscles," said Manadonese Stephen Lapian. "But if you cut the armpit in a wrong way, it will be very stinky."

Kentucky chicken

In Japan, many people head to Kentucky on Christmas—Kentucky Fried Chicken, that is.

The fast-food chain does a roaring trade over the Christmas period, with restaurants turning away customers on Dec. 24 if they haven't booked their chicken in advance.

"Over the period from 23rd to 25th December, sales can be as high as ten times normal levels," said Sumeo Yokokawa, of the public relations department at Kentucky Fried Chicken Japan.

The Kentucky Christmas habit started in 1974, after a foreign customer mentioned to a store manager that he had come to buy fried chicken because he was unable to find turkey in Japan. His words inspired a sales campaign that paid off.

Chinese ham

"The fashion at the time was to have a nice American-style Christmas," said Yokokawa. "So we offered the chicken as a set with a bottle of wine and it was very popular."

Chinese sweet ham is a popular centerpiece for Christmas Eve dinner in the Philippines, where the affluent serve up roast pig or turkey. Filipinos pride themselves on celebrating the longest Christmas in the world, with decorations going up in September.

Although Christmas is a normal working day in officially atheist China, big hotels in Beijing and Shanghai offer glitzy Christmas lunches and dinners.

Many smaller restaurants also get into the spirit with staff wearing Santa hats and windows decorated with tinsel, unthinkable in Chairman Mao Zedong's time.

Down Under, where Christmas falls in high summer, an Australian Christmas lunch is more likely to be seafood and salad than roast turkey and pudding.

Popular Christmas fare includes prawns or lobster, followed by barbecued barramundi or snapper, alongside cold meats.

"As the weather gets hotter and hotter, people just don't want to be inside cooking over the stove," Louise Nock, a fish market marketing manager, told Reuters.

And if you still have room, try the region's vast array of desserts, which range from Filipino "bibingka"—an egg-based rice cake topped with grated cheese and coconut—to a Portuguese-style rice and fruit cake in Bangladesh.

In Japan, many families opt for a plain sponge cake topped with whipped cream and strawberries. As delicious as it sounds, the term "Christmas cake" had been long used to refer to unmarried women over the age of 25, who were said to be past their best, like cakes after Dec. 25. *Reuters*

Popular Christmas carols go local in Pampanga

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

ANGELES CITY—IN PAMPANGA, a former virtual American colony for hosting Clark Air Base, Christmas carols ceased being just "I'm Dreamin' of a White Christmas" and "Silent Night" or beyond its Tagalog neighbor's counterpart "Ang Pasko ay Sumapit."

Yuletide songs now come in the native language Kapampangan, recorded on at least two compact discs produced by groups promoting the local culture.

The newest collection, "Paskung Kapampangan: The Kapampangan Christmas Album," features the folk song "Atin Ku Pung Singsing" and 13 new songs that won in last year's Christmas songwriting contest.

Launched in November, the CDs have made brisk sales locally and abroad, according to Robby Tantingco, executive director of the Holy Angel University's Center for Kapampangan Studies, the album producer.

Explaining the dearth of traditional carols, Tantingco said: "Throughout the Spanish colonial times, Christmas celebrations were purely church-based including Latin music. It was the Americans who brought in the carols."

Paskung Kapampangan
The Juan D. Nepomuceno Center for Kapampangan Studies
presents
The Kapampangan Christmas Album
featuring the
Holy Angel University

TONETTE OREJAS/INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON

COVER of CD of Christmas tunes in Kapampangan.

That aspect of the "stateside" culture, he said, came from the American teachers or Thomasian educators who established the public school system in the province, briefly the country's capital, and the soldiers assigned to Clark, one of the United States' largest facilities overseas.

Although going without local carols, Tantingco said Kapampangans celebrated Christmas in ways that fused the native and Spanish culture through food feasts and religious rites that include lantern processions or festivals.

Singers of *polosa* (extemporaneous songs belted out during planting, birthdays, weddings and just about any other happy event) tried to render the local touch by translating English carols. Totoy Bato and Ruth Lobo were among that ventured into this genre, Tantingco said.

All originals, the new carols "reflect the deep religiosity of the Kapampangans and blend it with folksy elements like culinary delights," he said.

"Maligayang Pasku, Maligayang Pusu" by Jun Marcos Nulud tells Christmas in this light: "Ugali keti Kapampangan/Magsadiang pamangan a manyaman/sigla ning sulu bale at king dalan/kantang macabie kapayapan (The tradition in Pampanga/We prepare sumptuous food/The happy lights in homes and on streets/Like songs bring peace)."

The other tracks are "Pasku Na, Magsadya Ta Na" (composed by Rudy A. Lopez), "Malucang Pascu" (Myron K. Marquez), "Ing Panalangin Cu Ngening Pascu" (Fr. Carmelo Agustin), "Masaya Ya Ing Pasku" (Roland Quiambao), King Paskung Daratang (Rudy A. Lopez), "Parul" (Kenneth Q. Macapugay), "Malucang Pascu" (Reprise), "Salamat 'Ting Pascu" (Jose Irwin Nucum), "Ing Panalangin Cu Ngening Pascu" (Reprise), "Espiritu ning Pasku" (Rey Galvez Arciga), "Pasku Na Naman (O Kacung Kaluguran)" (Jun Marcos Nulud), and "Pascua N'indispu" (Ernest C. Turla).

The songs were arranged by Edwin Lumanug, conducted by Reygie Honrada and performed by the HAU Chorale and soloists.

The HAU production followed that of "A Camalig Christmas," which the Batiauan Foundation launched in October 2005 in time for the 25th anniversary of the Camalig Restaurant here.

Containing 18 original Kapampangan Christmas songs and adaptations, some evoke memories of growing up in base town, said Marc Nepomuceno, Camalig owner and album producer.

"Oy Balen," sang to the tune of "Winter Wonderland," shares the joys of eating native delicacies after attending the dawn Masses.

Nepomuceno and project director Titus Toledo involved *polosa* singer Jimmy Baul and his band the Starlicks to do several songs including Alang Kapupusang Tula (Joy to the World) and Paskung Pamagsaya (Celebrating Christmas).

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200% pay for work on Christmas, New Year, Rizal Day

PRIVATE-SECTOR EMPLOYEES WHO REport for work on Christmas Day, Rizal Day and New Year's Day will get double pay, and those who report for work on the special nonworking days of Dec. 26 and 31 will get smaller extra pay, according to the Department of Labor and Employment.

For the regular holidays Dec. 25 and 30 and Jan. 1, employees will receive the regular wage even if they do not work on these days, whether those days are their regular workdays or rest days.

If the day is a regular workday for employees and they work on that day, they will get 200 percent of the regular wage for that day.

If employees work in excess of eight hours, they will receive the hourly rate for that day (which is 200 percent of their regular wage divided by eight), plus 30 percent of that hourly rate.

However, if the day is the employees' rest day, and they work on that day, they will receive 260 percent of their regular wage. If employees render overtime work, they will receive their hourly rate for that day (which is 260 percent of their regular wage divided by eight), plus 30 percent of that rate.

As for the special nonworking days Dec. 26 and 31 (New Year's Eve), the "no work, no pay policy" shall apply unless there is a favorable company policy, practice or collective bargaining agreement that grants payment on a special day even if that day is unworked.

If the day is worked, the pay will be equivalent to the employees' daily rate plus 30 percent for the first eight hours of work, and for work in excess of eight hours, plus another 30 percent of the hourly rate on the said day.

Jerome Aning

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, December 25, 2006
Nativity of the Lord

1st Reading: Is 52:7-10
2nd Reading: Heb 1:1-6
Gospel: John 1:1-18 (or 1:1-5, 9-14)

In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God; he was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him and without him nothing came to be. Whatever has come to be, found life in him, life which for humans was also light. Light that shines in the dark: light that darkness could not overcome. A man came, sent by God; his name was John. He came to bear witness, as a witness to introduce the Light so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light but a witness to introduce the Light.

For the Light was coming into the world, the true Light that enlightens everyone. He was already in the world and through him the world was made, the very world that did not know him. He came to his own, yet his own people did not receive him; but all who have received him he empowers to become children of God for they believe in his Name.

These are born, but without seed or carnal desire or will of man: they are born of God. And the Word was made flesh; he had his tent pitched among us, and we have seen his Glory, the Glory of the only Son coming from the Father: fullness of truth and loving-kindness.

John bore witness to him openly, saying: This is the one who comes after me, but he is already ahead of me for he was before me.

From his fullness we have all received, favor upon favor. For God had given us the Law through Moses, but Truth and Loving-kindness came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God-the-Only-Son made him known: the one who is in and with the Father.

Commentary

Raise a cry! Shout for joy! We can see our Lord directly before our eyes. Our God has come to comfort and redeem us. We behold our salvation. God now speaks to us clearly in the person, the body of Jesus, the Son who is the reflection of the Father's glory, who is the sustaining Word. From the beginning this Word is God, with God, in God and now this Word dwells with us in the world, flesh among us. We have all been given a share in his life, his light, his goodness and love. God has taken on our flesh humbly, loving us beyond description. Do we know this God among us? Do we love this God?

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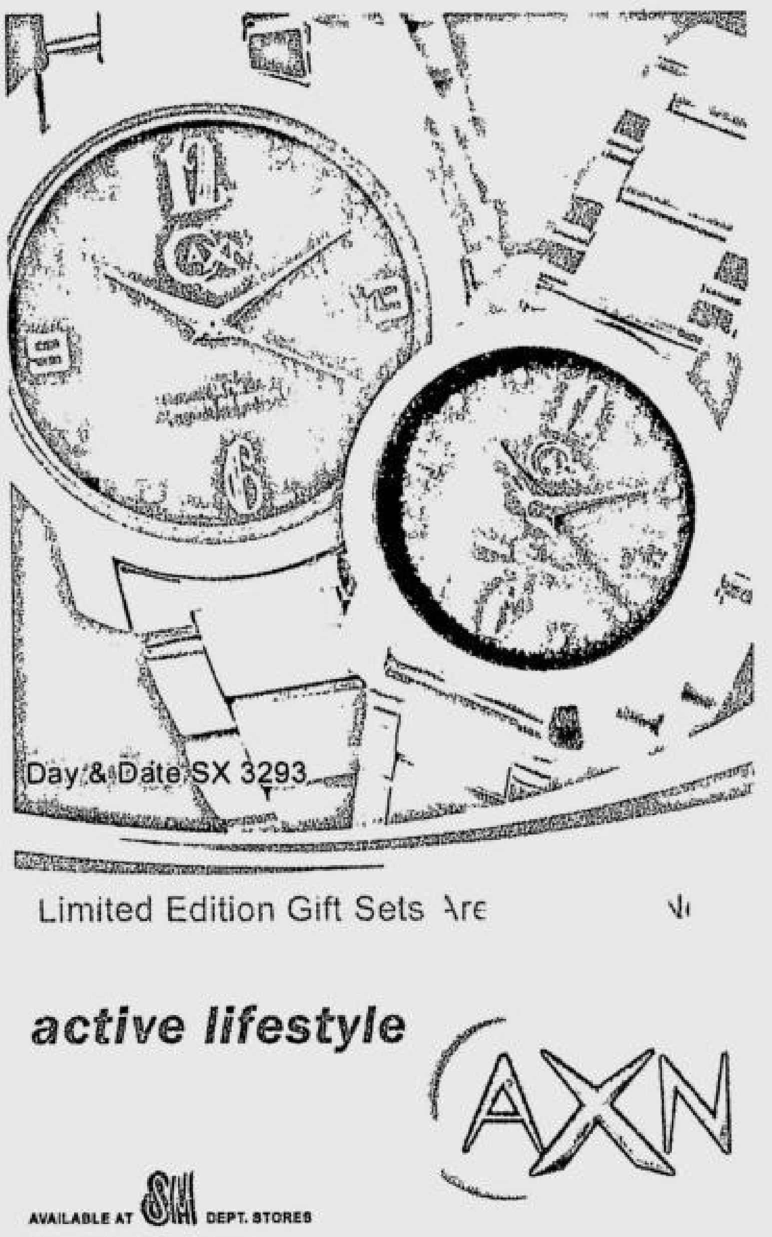
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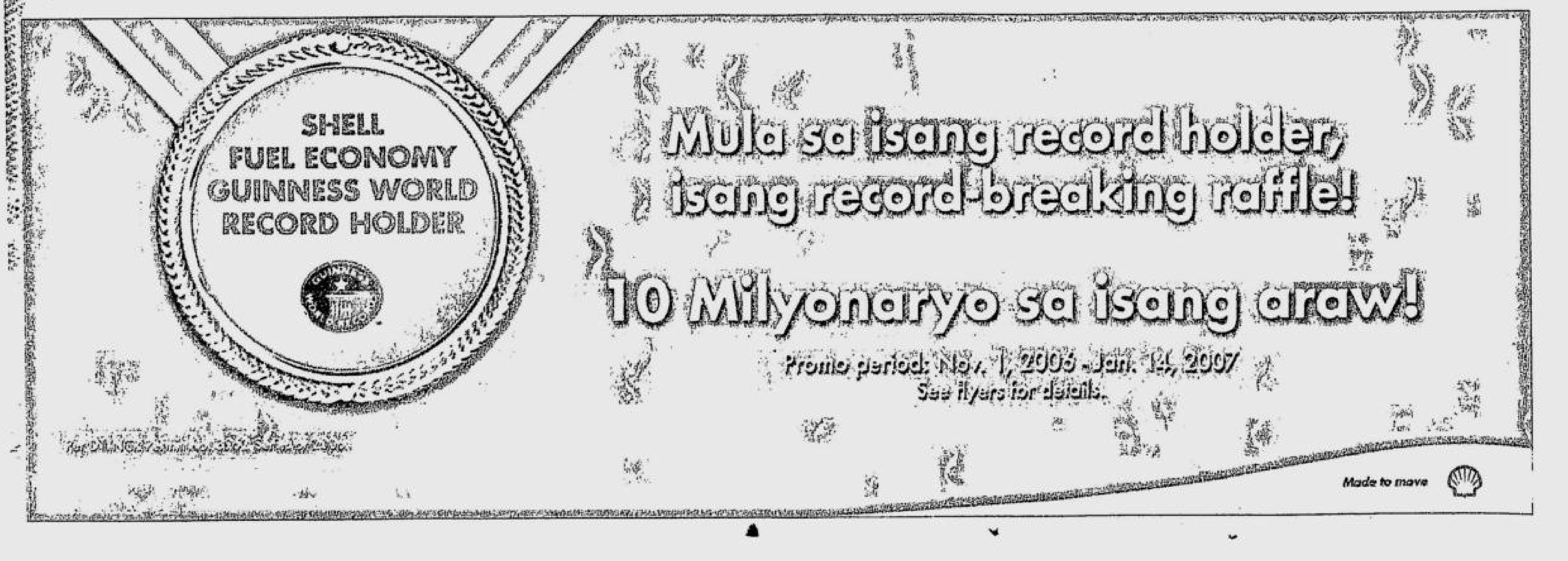
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Garcillano hopes DOJ ruling will end scandal

From page A1

Both senators said they had expected the DOJ, on the purported prodding of Malacañang, to clear the brains of the alleged fraud that came to be known as the "Hello Garci" scandal.

"We expected this. Malacañang and the DOJ have no choice but to drop the case. If the case were filed in court, Garci will go all over town pointing his fingers at them. They can't afford Garci telling on them," said Lacson, who had filed the charges along with a number of opposition congressmen.

If at all, the senator said, he and the other lawmakers had proved one thing: "[Those who benefited] remain hostages of Garci and whatever information he has on them. They remain hostages now and until God knows when."

Pimentel agreed.

"Why should you be surprised [at the DOJ decision]? A life that is full of lies must necessarily be supported by other lies," he said.

As early as November

The 12-page DOJ resolution was issued as early as Nov. 14 by State Prosecutor George Yarte and approved by Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño upon the recommendation of Assistant Chief Prosecutor Richard Fadullon.

But a copy of the decision was obtained by the media only the other day, faxed by Garcillano's lawyer Eddie Tamondong.

In throwing out the charges against Garcillano, the DOJ discredited a note verbale from Singapore and a Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas report.

It also said the opposition lawmakers failed to prove that Garcillano's statements at a House hearing were made under oath.

The DOJ found no probable cause to prosecute Garcillano for the 21 counts of perjury and falsification of passport charges filed against him by Lacson and 19 other members of Congress in March and April 2006.

The cases were initially investigated by Prosecutor Laurence Chua Cheng of the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office.

They were endorsed by the Quezon City Prosecutor to the DOJ for continuation of preliminary investigation and resolution, after the complaining legislators moved to inhibit the entire Quezon City Prosecutor's Office for alleged bias.

On the phone yesterday, Garcillano's wife Grace could not hide her elation.

"*Mabuti naman. Magandang Christmas 'to* (This is good. This will be a good Christmas)," she said, adding that she and her husband would share a simple *Noche Buena* (Christmas Eve dinner) at the farm.

Unresolved issues

The other lawmakers who brought the charges against Garcillano warned that the Arroyo administration's efforts to bury the truth would continue to haunt the incumbent in Malacañang and the country as a whole.

"Christmas is about reconciliation based on forgiveness and truth. But this Christmas, instead of giving the gift of truth to the Filipino people, the deception continues and it's Garci who continues to receive gifts from this administration," said House Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano.

"Although we really want reconciliation, peace, etc., the unresolved issues and continued whitewash do not augur well for the kind of reconciliation this country needs," he added.

Another minority deputy leader, Cavite Rep. Gilbert Remulla, also said in a text message that the ruling was not surprising.

"From the get-go we knew that our case would be dismissed by the prosecutors and the DOJ they answer to. We expected no less when the prosecutors refused to even look at our solid evidence," he said.

Remulla said even the media release of the decision was timed for "minimal impact on the public."

"It must be the administration's Christmas gift for Garci," he said, but added that the fight was "far from over."

He didn't lie

Grace Garcillano said her husband was delighted when he heard of the dismissal in the weekend.

"Of course, he's happy with the decision," she said, adding that the DOJ ruling clearly proved that her husband did not lie when he told the INQUIRER in a Nov. 27, 2005, interview that he did not leave the country following the surfacing of the "Garci tapes."

"I was here all this time," Garcillano said then.

Declared Grace yesterday: "My husband did not lie."

Grace refused to comment on the specifics of the allegations against her husband, insisting that "details are more accurate in the proceedings."

But she said that for some reason, the complainants bungled their own cases, and therefore had only themselves to blame for their legal defeat.

"They did not submit their own memorandum (reply to Garcillano's counteraffidavit) for a long time. It's not fair to prolong the case just because the other side will not submit their own memo," she said.

She also defended her husband from allegations that his passport, which bears no immigration stamp indicating he had left the country, had been tampered with.

"They question his passport. But not all passports are the same. It's possible that there may have been deviations during the production process. They say the passport size does not conform to standards, but I don't know their standards," she said.

No closure

Lacson and Pimentel expressed the belief that the dismissal of the charges would not put a closure to the scandal.

"Just like the impeachment [cases against Ms Arroyo] filed in the House, there's no closure to this," Lacson said.

Said Pimentel: "The Garci controversy will not end until the truth is out. Lies divide; only the truth unites."

Lacson said it would not be prudent to appeal the DOJ resolution.

"It's useless to file an appeal. With [Justice Secretary Raul] Gonzalez and Malacañang at the helm, it will only be dismissed. Everyone is the hostage of Garci now. At the proper time, this case will be revived," he said.

Lacson expressed disagreement with the prosecutor's finding that there was no probable cause to file a case against the former Comelec official.

He said he and the congressmen had presented strong evidence, including an authentication from Singapore's foreign ministry that Garcillano had stopped in the city-state on July 14 on his way to London.

"It would have been easy to prove probable cause with those pieces of evidence," he said. *With reports from TJ Burgonio and Leila B. Salaverria*

TIMELINE

GARCILLANO

2005

June 6—To preempt an alleged opposition plot, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye plays two CDs of supposed conversations between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, about an alleged attempt to rig the May 2004 elections.

June 9—Ms Arroyo denies cheating in the polls.

June 14—Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos says Garcillano technically lost his position after Ms Arroyo failed to renew his ad interim appointment, which expired on June 10. Abalos says there is nothing wrong with a candidate asking a Comelec official to safeguard his/her votes.

June 19—Garcillano's wife Grace denies in a phone interview that she and her husband left Cagayan de Oro City for Malaysia. She says Garcillano is in the country.

June 21—Congress opens inquiries into alleged wiretapping of the President's phone.

June 27—On TV, Ms Arroyo admits talking to an election official whom she does not name. She denies rigging the election, saying she was only anxious to protect her vote because of the slow canvass. She asks for forgiveness, adding what she did was a lapse in judgment, but indicates she will not resign.

July 5—Garcillano surfaces and denies rigging the election in favor of Ms Arroyo.

July 6—Garcillano issues affidavit clearing Ms Arroyo of poll fraud, and identifies certain lawmakers as those who called him to express concern about fraud.

July 8—Ten Cabinet members, later called the "Hyatt 10," resign their posts and ask Ms Arroyo to do the same.

July 28—NBI says it tried to serve a subpoena to Garcillano in his former condominium unit in Ermita, Manila, and at his residence in Cagayan de Oro City, but he was not there.

Aug. 3—House orders Garcillano's arrest after he ignored its summons twice.

Aug. 17—The Department of Foreign Affairs divulges report from Singapore foreign ministry saying Garcillano arrived in that country on July 14—the day Congress issued a subpoena—and left for an undisclosed place the next day.

Nov. 22—Grace Garcillano says her husband is back.

Nov. 27—In an interview with the INQUIRER in Cotabato City, Garcillano denies leaving the country and talking to Ms Arroyo about rigging the 2004 election. He says he is willing to face inquiry.

Dec. 4—Garcillano turns himself in to authorities in Maguindanao and flies to Manila.

Dec. 7—Garcillano testifies at a House inquiry but says he cannot answer questions regarding the tapes because the petition he filed before the Supreme Court is pending.

He admits talking to Ms Arroyo during the canvassing but claims there was no mention of protecting votes. He promises to produce his passport in a week, if he can find it, to prove he did not leave the country.

Dec. 13—Garcillano testifies that he did not speak with Ms Arroyo's husband during the election period.

Dec. 14—Garcillano admits it was his voice on tape but insists it was spliced.

2006

March 24—Sen. Pánfilo Lacson and Representatives Alan Peter Cayetano, Teofisto Guingona III and Joel Villanueva lodge charges of perjury, falsification of public document and violation of the Passport Act against Garcillano before the Quezon City prosecutor's office.

April 4—Rep. Gilbert Remulla and 15 other congressmen file 21 counts of perjury and falsification of public documents and two counts of violation of the Passport Act before the Quezon City prosecutor's office.

The charges are separate from the previous complaint but are based on the same facts.

Nov. 14—Department of Justice dismisses the perjury and falsification of passport charges.

Inquirer Research

Poor Bulacan pupils wear Ople's Shoes

From page A1

affluent uncle, and my aching feet nearly ruined my performance," he added.

The passage became the inspiration for "Ople's Shoes," a gift-giving project launched in mid-November but was still handing out a few more pairs last week, because its young recipients had to look their best for their class Christmas parties.

Bearing gifts from a Magus, so to speak, was the Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute (BOPC), an organization set up in 2004, a year after Ople passed away at age 76. He was the foreign secretary then.

Aside from this latest project, the center has mainly been involved in helping overseas Filipino workers in distress and providing scholarships for children of journalists.

An initial batch of 15 pupils from Grade 1 to first year high school has received shiny, Marikina-made black shoes. Part of the funds for this opening edition of Ople's Shoes was sent by two overseas Filipino workers, Jocelyn Godinez and Rolly Bermudo.

Once upon a time

"We wanted to remind [the recipients] that once upon a time there was a child—just like them—who had to walk to school in slippers," said Susan "Toots" Ople, Ka Blas' daughter who is now the center's president.

"But because of hard work and a love for books and writing, that child was able to succeed in life as a writer, public official and statesman. It was a message of hope that comes with a new pair of black, shiny shoes," Susan told the INQUIRER.

She noted that due to limited funds, the project could only cover four schools for now, starting in her father's native town, namely, the Hagonoy East Central Elementary School, Pulo Elementary School, Sto. Rosario Elementary School and the San Roque High School.

Thank-you notes

The pupils have since sent handwritten thank-you notes to the center. One boy named Cisco, a freshman at San Roque High School who goes to school earlier than everyone else because he helps collect trash, shed tears of joy upon receiving his pair, Susan recounted.

"We were actually deluged with requests after asking the schools for a list of pupils whose parents could not afford to buy them new shoes," she said. "We hope next time we get deluged with sponsorships, too."

Susan and her staff revisited the campuses on Thursday and caught up with some of the recipients who, earlier in the day, wore their new shoes at their Christmas parties.

Christmas shoes

But while having new shoes visibly added holiday cheer to the children and their parents, the trip also afforded poignant glimpses into the dismal conditions of the proverbially unshod.

Six-year-old Gina Aromin, a Grade 1 pupil in Hagonoy East, had been sharing her pair with sister Carmina, 8, despite the difference in the size of their feet. This was according to their mother Vilma, a janitress in the school.

Wedding shoes

Another recipient, Anton Urbano Jr., 7, said he had been hesitant to wear his new pair since going to class in Pulo Elementary meant crossing muddy rice paddies. He would make this trek each day, covering about 6 kilometers, carrying a 3 kg schoolbag and only P10 in his pocket.

And in a further "twist" that O. Henry would have noted, Anton and his widowed mother, Dolores, said, and not without embarrassment, that the person who actually wore the shoes for the first time was the "groom" of Anton's sister.

Dolores said her new son-in-law "borrowed" Anton's shoes for his Dec. 9 wedding and has yet to return them.

Susan also looked for another recipient that day, but learned that the boy—a part-time garbage scavenger—was still working the streets of Paombong town and could not be immediately located.

Ka Blas would have perfectly understood.

(The Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute can be reached at Tel. No. 833-5337 or at blasoplecenter@gmail.com)

Extra special Christmas for park rangers

From page A1

World Heritage Sites.

Healing the damage caused by poaching and dynamite fishing, the atoll has been closely guarded by park rangers like Calderon all year round.

But unlike ordinary sentinels, park rangers work in three-month shifts. Spending the holidays in the middle of the sea 150 kilometers away from Palawan's capital city of Puerto Princesa is all in a day's work.

"I am very happy to be with my family now. This is better than last year, when we were only seven men in the middle of the sea," Calderon said.

He and six other park rangers from the Philippine Coast Guard and the Philippine Navy had just returned a few weeks ago from their three-month stay in Tubbataha.

Away from home again

He knows he is lucky. His team was replaced by six park rangers on the atoll, who will not be home until March.

Though he had returned with Calderon from Tubbataha, park ranger Roy Magbanua, 35, will also be spending Christmas away from his family.

Magbanua had been looking forward to eating *noche buena* with his family.

But the boat carrying him to his island hometown of Cagayancillo, where his five children were eagerly waiting for him, had to sail back to the city because of strong waves.

"This is my third consecutive Christmas away from my family," he told the INQUIRER in a text message yesterday.

Scouring the seas

Calderon started working as a research assistant for the Tubbataha Management Office in 2003. He is a marine biology graduate of the Palawan State University.

To monitor species of marine animals and birds as well as guard the atoll from poachers and hunters, Calderon also had to be deployed in the open sea.

For his most recent shift, Calderon sailed with Magbanua and five other park rangers from the TMO office in Puerto Princesa in August.

Traveling on a speed boat, his team also carried with them 25 kilos of brown sugar, 30 cans of sardines and tens of cans of other canned goods, packs of spices to last for three months, tanks of fuel for their boats and almost 5,000 liters of fresh water for drinking, cooking and bathing.

There are also some bottles of brandy to help them cope with loneliness.

The park rangers stay in a white igloo-shaped concrete quarters built on stilts rising from the water on the south islet.

They have solar panels to run radios for monitoring, radar, satellite phone and yes, they have a cable-ready television set with access to at least 60 channels. They also have a DVD player. But they only switch these on usually at noon. Energy is precious and they have to conserve.

The day begins as early as the sun rises. Calderon and some park rangers set out to the north islet to monitor migratory birds. Those staying at the quarters scout the area for poachers. Passing boats will have to be inspected.

Games to survive boredom

The park rangers also play game cards to help them survive boredom. They are provided with a phone allowance for the satellite phone installed in their quarters, but few minutes of talk can never be enough.

The sunset is majestic, but it just reminds the park rangers how slow the days pass while they are away from their loved ones.

Tears quietly fall even from some of the soldiers, especially the younger ones, the moment darkness descended. They would hide from their comrades, but they understand one another's pain.

The pain is worth it.

"I love my work," Calderon said in an interview during a national conference for the protection of the Tubbataha Reef in Puerto Princesa last week.

"I chose this profession. I am proud because I know I am giving my share in protecting a World Heritage Site," he also told the INQUIRER.

Sea abundant again

Thanks to the vigilance of the park rangers, the sea is again abundant. Using hook and line, they can depend on the sea for sumptuous meals when their food supply runs out.

But the sea is also unpredictable and can be angry at times.

Days before Christmas last year, Calderon and some park rangers had come from the north islet for their daily patrol and were on their way back to the barracks when the speed boat suddenly conked out.

The park rangers could not protect themselves from the strong waves sweeping the boat away.

"We were lucky because the waves just brought us back to the direction of the south islet. Otherwise, we would have been lost in the middle of the sea," Calderon said.

The experience failed to dampen their spirits, however. Calderon said the park rangers made lanterns using discarded newspapers for Christmas last year.

They cooked pasta with slices of canned sausage and took turns in calling their families using the satellite phone.

They comforted themselves in knowing that next year will be a happier Christmas.

The shifts are arranged in such a way that no park ranger spends two consecutive Christmases on the atoll, unless there's stroke of bad luck, like the one that hit Magbanua.

And so this Christmas will be a merry one for Calderon.

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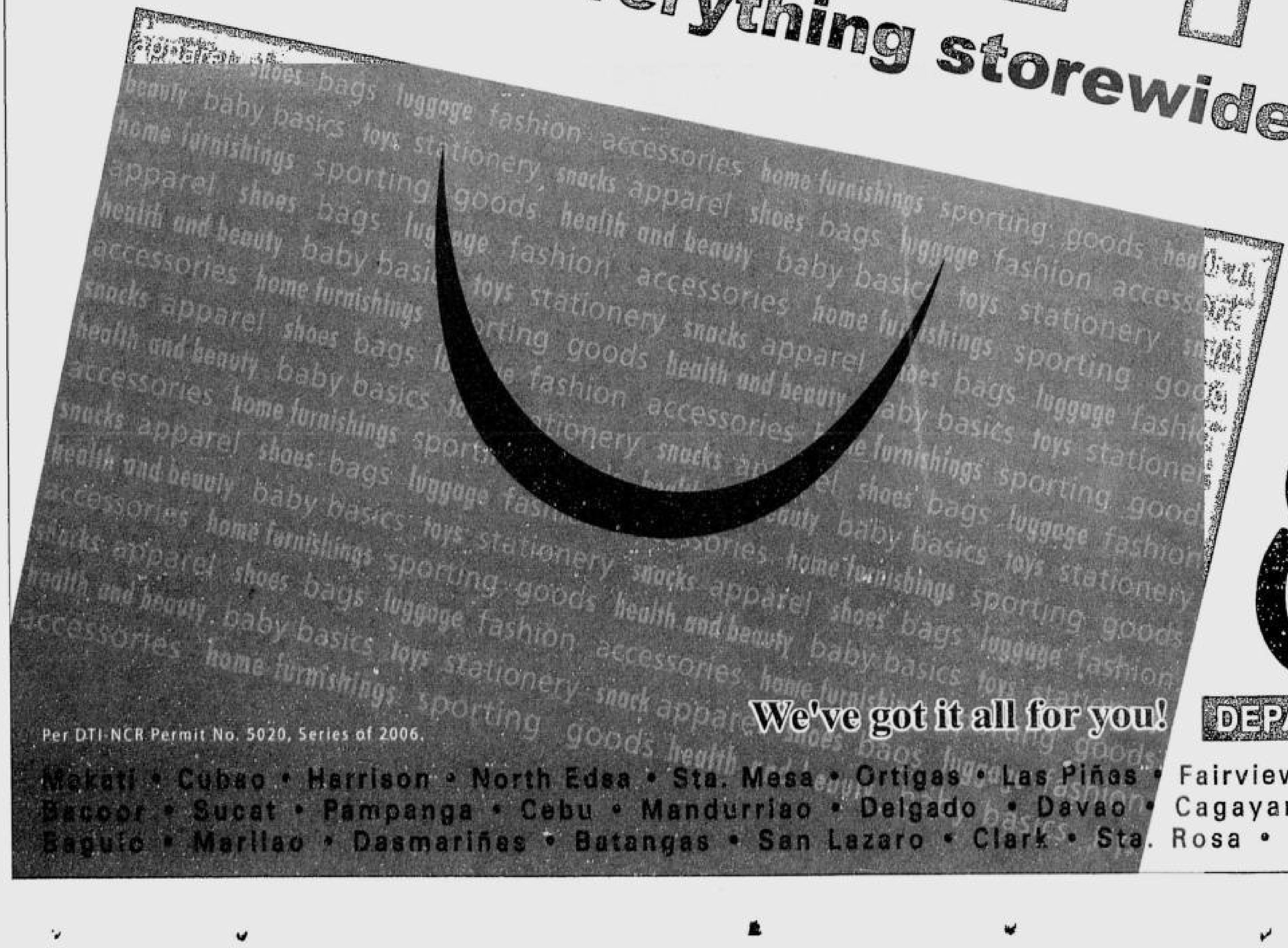
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Family of slain solon vows to get Valera

From page A1

ing but requested the INQUIRER not to mention where the interview took place, saying the Philippine National Police was out to pin him down on the murder and incarcerate him.

Ex-Army M/Sgt. Rufino Panday, 63, who was arrested three days after the murder, has confessed that he belonged to a group of five men hired for the P5-million project to kill Bersamin and that he acted as lookout.

Panday told investigators that the leader of the group, former Vice Mayor Freddie Dupo, had revealed to him that Valera masterminded the killing of Bersamin.

Murder charges have been filed against Panday, Dupo, alleged triggerman Dominador Barbosa, the driver of the getaway motorcycle identified as Sonny Taculao, and a John Doe.

Police said most of the suspects were from La Paz, Abra.

No case yet against Valera

No criminal case has yet been brought against Valera although his house in Bangued had been searched for weapons on the strength of a warrant issued by a Quezon City judge—an action Valera has protested in his interview with the INQUIRER, saying he has not been charged with any crime.

Yesterday, Quezon City police chief Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula said that if Valera was innocent, he should show up at the police headquarters and execute an affidavit formally denying the allegations against him.

"It's up to him to submit and clarify or clear his name. He is always welcome to open his person to investigation. It's in his hands," Gatdula said.

Gatdula said that police had not yet filed charges against Valera, citing insufficiency of evidence. "Valera is the mastermind as heard by Panday from Freddie Dupo. But that is hearsay and insufficient to prove the governor's involvement [in the Bersamin murder]," said Gatdula.

He said investigators were looking for more solid evidence to support Panday's testimony. "We will be reinforcing what Panday has said so it can stand in court. We need very strong evidence because the criminal justice system demands proof beyond reasonable doubt. An iota of doubt will lead to an acquittal."

Stepped-up manhunt

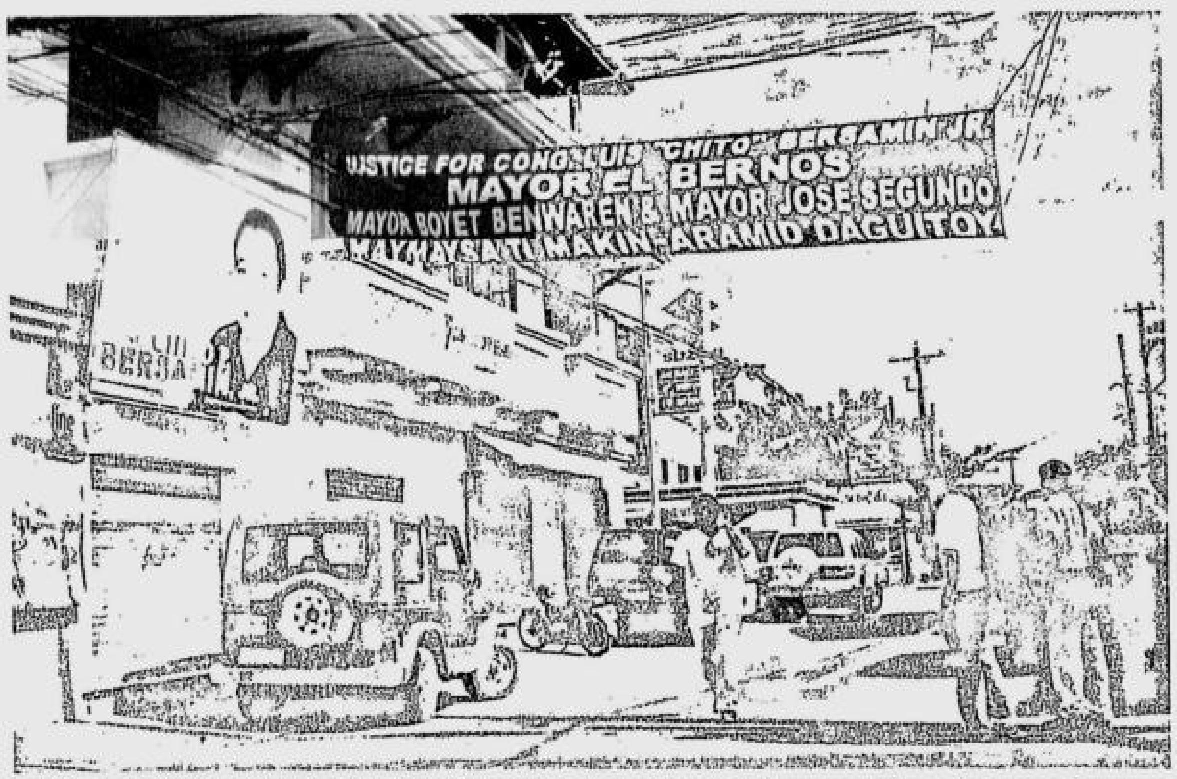
Gatdula added that all units under Task Force Bersamin were stepping up the manhunt for Dupo, whose testimony could finally break the case wide open and unmask the mastermind and other suspects.

"We are conducting the manhunt for Dupo, Dominador Barbosa and Sonny Taculao. We will have a good development in the case in the next few days," he said.

Charrie Bersamin said Valera's presence in the wedding was suspicious. "They don't attend [weddings] where they are not sponsors," she said.

She doubted Valera's story to the INQUIRER that he and Bersamin had talked inside the church. "They have not talked publicly since the 2004 elections," she said.

She said Valera's "unusually early exit from the church" was also irregular.


JUSTICE FOR CONG. LUIS "CHITO" BERSAMIN JR.
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A STREAMER calling for justice for slain Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. stretches across the main street of Bangued, capital town of Abra.

LEONCIO BALBIN/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

"We have common friends who apologized for him, saying that he had to leave because he wanted to urinate," Bersamin's daughter said.

"But if he (Valera) had known immediately about the killing, why did he not return?" she asked.

She also said that the Valeras and their men were nowhere to be found when the body of Bersamin arrived here on Dec. 21.

Covenant of unity

She said the possible motive was mentioned by Valera in the interview with the INQUIRER and that was the supposed "covenant of unity" which was signed by the Valeras and Bersamin in January 2004.

In that covenant, Valera's wife, Zita, would still run for mayor of the capital town, Bangued, and not run against Bersamin in the congressional race. But in turn, Bersamin would step down in 2007 and instead change places with Zita. Bersamin would also support Zita in her congressional bid.

"But then things became complicated because Bersamin became the Kampi head here and it was up to the party to decide," said Charrie. (Kampi is President Macapagal-Arroyo's party.)

She said her father's plan to run either as governor or congressman had been in his mind for the past few weeks.

"I remembered what one of his aides told me a few days before his death, while he was being helped in putting on his clothes," Charrie said. "He asked his aide, 'Am I too old already not to run again?'"

Hold-travel order

Lawyer Alfredo Villamor Sr., Bersamin's uncle and political consultant, said the family had asked that a hold order on travel be issued against the Valeras, as well as their bodyguards, so they would not be able to escape.

The family also sought the inclusion in the hold order of Orlando Bugtong, Eric Parel, Urbano Quiambao, Nelson Parel and Zoilo Banez, all allies and bodyguards of the governor.

Villamor's son Alfredo Jr., who is a lawyer, has also requested a lifestyle check on the Valera couple.

Court of Appeals Associate Justice Lucas Bersamin, brother of the slain congressman, said the family would prefer to wait for the final results of the police investigation.

"The police and the NBI (National Bureau of Investigation) have the full freedom to develop the case. We requested that no shortcuts are to be taken and not to buckle down to pressure in coming up with the conclusion," the justice said.

On the tagging of Valera in the case by police, Justice Bersamin pointed out that the police had admitted that Panday's statements were based on hearsay

Bersamin unbeatable?

"He (Panday) was not a direct witness to the planning. They (police) know what they are doing. But there are still other leads and something more should be done in finding the masterminds," Justice Bersamin said.

He said the family had their "own suspicions" about the identity of the mastermind but stressed that they would rather wait for the conclusion of the police investigation.

On the denial of Valera, Justice Bersamin said: "It's up to him. We have no problem with that. That was published in the interest of hearing everyone."

He also confirmed that his brother had signed a "Covenant of Unity" with the Valeras concerning the coming elections and that his brother "had every intention of abiding by that agreement."

On the apparent power struggle between the two families, Justice Bersamin just had this to say: "No one can beat my brother fair and square in any electoral arena."

'Reming' heroes bind 2 widows

From page A1

grated National Police).

Annie's spouse, PO2 Julhasan Arasain, 50, was a member of the Philippine Army's rescue team.

Both died heroes when they disappeared under cascading volcanic debris while trying to save residents—their neighbors—living near the road to the famous Cagsawa Ruins.

Julhasan was honored by the Armed Forces of the Philippines for the ultimate sacrifice of dying in the line of duty.

Happier times

Salvyn and Annie recalled how their families would celebrate personal joys and happy occasions like they were the closest of kin, although they are only distantly related.

The two families decided to stay together in the house of Annie's parents, 1.7 kilometers from the site of the tragedy. Their respective relatives were more than willing to provide comfort and shelter while they grieve.

And if it's any consolation, they learned that they were among the survivors with the smallest number of family members killed by Supertyphoon "Reming" on Nov. 30.

Last call

Annie said the last time she saw her husband alive was on the morning of Nov. 27. It was drizzling and Julhasan walked her to the bus stop and waited for her to get her ride to Pio Duran, the town where she stayed while Reming wrought havoc.

"He smiled at me. We had no premonition of what would occur later," she said.

Annie said that on Nov. 30, Julhasan tried to ring her at 5 a.m. but she missed his call because she was asleep. She was finally awakened by a text message from her husband at 5:45 a.m., asking how she was while the typhoon raged.

"I tried several times to call him, but I could not make any connection. I was confident nothing bad would happen to our family," she said.

Doing the rounds

Salvyn narrated that before noon on Nov. 30, Julhasan, who was on active duty with the Army's civil relations unit, went around the neighborhood, checking passageways and riverbanks for signs of flooding.

Their neighborhood was a mix of overseas Filipino workers, wage earners and middle-class farmers, who are related to one another by blood or affinity.

They lived in clustered houses separated only by narrow pathways that crisscrossed residential lot boundaries.

Salvyn said that a little past noon, the river started to swell. A few minutes later, it had swallowed a house by the riverbanks.

Higher grounds

Julhasan and Ethelwaldo were on their way to save two elderly people, two children and a woman in her 20s, trapped inside a crumbling house.

Salvyn said the bosom buddies were able to save one child and one elderly person. They brought the two survivors to the house of Annie's parents where other neighbors had also taken shelter.

"We had just given dry clothes to the two survivors when floodwaters started to rise. We were knee-deep in water in just seconds, prompting Noel (Julhasan) and my husband to command us to move to the next concrete two-story house, about 10 meters away from where we were," Salvyn said.

She said Julhasan and Ethelwaldo were able to transfer 36 people to the higher two-story structure.

Rising waters

Salvyn said it was a struggle to stay alive amid rising floodwaters and 200-kph winds.

From the rooftop of one two-story house, they jumped to a higher two-story structure where they stayed until rising waters caught up with them.

So they jumped to a three-story building, where 56 of them stayed till late afternoon when the floodwaters and strong winds finally subsided.

Left behind

Salvyn said she never thought Julhasan and Ethelwaldo would be swept away by the floodwaters. But as the night dragged on and the two friends failed to return, the tragic possibility started to sink in.

Salvyn said she was proud that her husband sacrificed his life so that others may live. This, however, does not take away the pain of losing him.

Julhasan left behind three children—John Ezra, 18; Xylona, 16; and Xavier, 16.

Ethelwaldo will be missed by his children, Ethyl, 16; and Keanu, 13.

Palace to CA: Turn over Smith to US

From page A1

of Foreign Affairs, was filed shortly before the close of office hours at the appellate court, and officials there merely "noted" its filing.

This means that the court will deliberate on the latest OSG motion only on Dec. 27, when it resumes sessions, Solicitor General Antonio Eduardo Nachura said yesterday in a phone interview.

This also means that Smith will spend Christmas Day today at the Makati City Jail, where he has been held since he was convicted on Dec. 4 of raping "Nicole," a Filipino woman, at the Subic Bay Freeport on Nov. 1, 2005.

Nachura said the new motion was a result of another agreement forged between Manila and Washington regarding their Dec. 19 manifestation before the appellate court seeking Smith's transfer to US custody.

Place of detention

The new agreement was signed by Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney on Friday morning, or hours before the US Embassy confirmed the announcement of Adm. William Fallon, chief of the US Pacific Command, that the annual RP-US Balikatan military exercises had been canceled.

The second agreement specifies a room at the US Embassy in Manila where Smith will be detained while his rape conviction is being appealed, the solicitor general said.

It also states that the Philippine government, police and interior secretary will be given "inspection rights," he said.

According to Nachura, the new agreement is also meant to allay fears that US authorities will "spirit Smith away" if he is returned to American custody.

The cancelation of Balikatan 2007 was a result of the legal dispute over how the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement, a 1999 document governing the conduct of the joint military exercises, should apply to Smith, particularly on whether he should be returned to US custody while his conviction is on appeal.

Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon, who heard the rape case and eventually convicted Smith, had ordered that the soldier be detained at the Makati City Jail.

Smith's lawyers questioned the decision and took the case to the appellate court. And in keeping with VFA commitments, Malacañang, through the DFA, filed a motion in intervention and asked the appellate court to return Smith to US custody.

But the court said it must review Pozon's commitment order before making a decision.

The US Embassy contends that Smith's continued incarceration at the Makati City Jail is in violation of the VFA—a position in which the Philippine departments of justice and of foreign affairs concur.

Nachura said he hoped the appellate court would favorably consider the latest motion of the executive branch.

He said the custody case was now in the court's hands, the executive branch having exerted efforts to have Smith transferred to US custody in keeping with VFA commitments.

Don't bamboozle court

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. cautioned Malacañang against pressuring the Court of Appeals on the custody case.

Pimentel said the Philippine government was "well within its right" to voice its position on the case in view of the cancelation of Balikatan 2007. But he said the issue "should be taken within the ambit of the case" now pending before the court.

"To allow the executive branch to bamboozle the court, that is something else," the senator told the INQUIRER.

If at all, he said, the executive branch should argue its case before the court of law, not before "the bar of public opinion."

"They should push their arguments through the judicial process. In other words, any pressure should be subsumed by arguments presented to the court. They should make their arguments, not before the court of public opinion, but before the court of law," Pimentel said.

On Saturday, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that the cancelation of Balikatan 2007 was a "setback" to the Philippine military's modernization program, and that the appellate court should consider the VFA.

"What is important is to have an early resolution. We leave that to the sound judgment of the appellate court, but it should consider our international commitment," Bunye said.

Divisive pressure

Pimentel also advised the appellate court not to "yield to "external pressure" and to "decide on the case on its legal merits."

"Only in that way will the issue be laid to rest," he said, adding:

"Like extrajudicial killings, extrajudicial pressure is divisive."

Pimentel also said the Philippine government had no reason to complain if the US government canceled the war games and, eventually, stopped giving aid to the country.

"If the United States, the only superpower in the world, believes that the Balikatan exercises are not that vital for its security and ours, who are we to complain?" he said.

People tend to give more when observed

From page A1

"Competitive altruism" is the phrase used by Willer and his partner, Pat Barclay of Cornell University, for this strategic one-upmanship of beneficence.

The juxtaposition of these terms may seem riddled with contradiction, but Willer disagreed.

"Altruism is defined in evolutionary biology as a behavior that is costly to one individual and beneficial to another," he said. "It's not hung up on motivations."

The study, "Partner Choice Creates Competitive Altruism in Humans," was published this week in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society of London: Biological Sciences.

The findings signal significant implications for our understanding of human cooperation in everyday life, according to Willer.

"People value money and resources, but they also value having a good reputation and are willing to invest in maintaining one," Willer said.

"We had this feeling that people do this all the time, but no one had ever set up the conditions under which you could say 'aha' this is competitive altruism."

Lab experiments

Willer and Barclay conducted their laboratory experiments with 31 women and 23 men paired off with "lab dollars" that they could donate to their partners.

The researchers found that subjects would donate more when the amount would be disclosed to possible future partners, a way to signal generosity.

The incentive to compete in giving comes when choice enters into the equation, according to Willer.

When subjects were allowed to choose their partners, they were more likely to give above and beyond what they would give to simply signal generosity, entering into the realm of "competitive altruism."

Competition for partners

But how do human subjects exchanging phony cash in a cubicle have a bearing on the way we relate in everyday life?

"People give more to gain access to a third party," Willer said. "People will be more generous if they know they're being watched. It could be to find a mate. It could be to make friends."

Conspicuous generosity is a feature of competition for social partners, according to the study.

Both males and females value generosity, Willer said.

"People want to spotlight their most positive attributes," he said. "In a large party at a restaurant, the person who picks up the check gets the glory."

Robber barons

This research also may shed light on large-scale corporate giving. "The golden age of philanthropy is now," Peter Singer, an influential US philosopher, recently announced.

Bill Gates, chief executive of software giant Microsoft and the world's wealthiest man, gave $30 billion this year toward fighting disease in the developing world.

Warren Buffett, the second richest man, made history this year with the largest charitable donation to date—$31 billion to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

But the beginnings of corporate philanthropy appeared right around the time of the rise of the robber barons, said Willer.

"I'm not suggesting that Gates and Buffett aren't sincere," he said. "But Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, and Carnegie were responding to allegations of selfishness in the face of antitrust issues."

Anecdotal evidence

Although Willer acknowledged no real data existed to support his contention there is a spike in competitive altruism around the holidays, he offered some compelling anecdotal evidence.

"You know how there is always that one family member who really goes overboard, and then you essentially give this weird second order gift of not trying to outdo them because it would ruin their Christmas," Willer said.

"Well, that's competitive altruism at work." AFP

PALACE PROSPECTS FOR 2007

Cabinet changes, bullish economic outlook

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MORE CHANGES IN THE CABInet, more glowing economic indicators and more interviews with the media are some of the things that the public can expect from President Macapagal-Arroyo in 2007.

In an interview on Saturday with dzRB radio, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye disclosed that the Cabinet had remained under constant review and that personnel changes were forthcoming, not only because of the senatorial elections in May.

Trust and confidence

Bunye said a Cabinet position was "one of trust and confidence" that the President could "change any time, and not necessarily [because of] election-related [reasons]."

"The performance of every Cabinet member is constantly under review by the President, and [getting replaced] is part of the job description," he said.

Running for elections

According to Bunye, a number of Cabinet members may resign their posts if they decide to run in the elections.

He is among the Cabinet members reportedly being considered to fill up the administration's 12-slot senatorial lineup for the polls.

"We are not intervening in this matter too much because some of them might take a different route. They will be making their own announcements, and it is not for us to advertise their plans," he said.

One-on-one interviews

Bunye also said the President was committed to opening up to the media, which she had systematically avoided since the "Hello Garci" scandal broke out in 2005.

"There will be more one-on-one interviews in 2007. We have to give that due weight," he said.

Bunye said the President had likewise maintained a "bullish outlook" for next year as the bitter fiscal reforms she initiated shortly after her election in 2004 were continuing to pay dividends in terms of improving economic data.

"Our people have every reason to remain upbeat not just this Christmas but in the year to come as we are on full swing toward economic takeoff," he said, adding:

"The markets have been surging to record highs, investments are up, purchasing power is steady, and all indicators support a bullish 2007.

Good governance

"The Filipinos and the rest of the world are witness to how this government has acted decisively to move the economy to bear social fruit in terms of better-paying jobs, enhanced social services and a reduced incidence of hunger and poverty. Good governance and the people's enterprise are making things happen in the Philippines."

Bunye also said "the unprecedented strengthening of the peso, the robust investment inflows, and the steady improvement in the peso's purchasing power" all indicated a bullish outlook for 2007.

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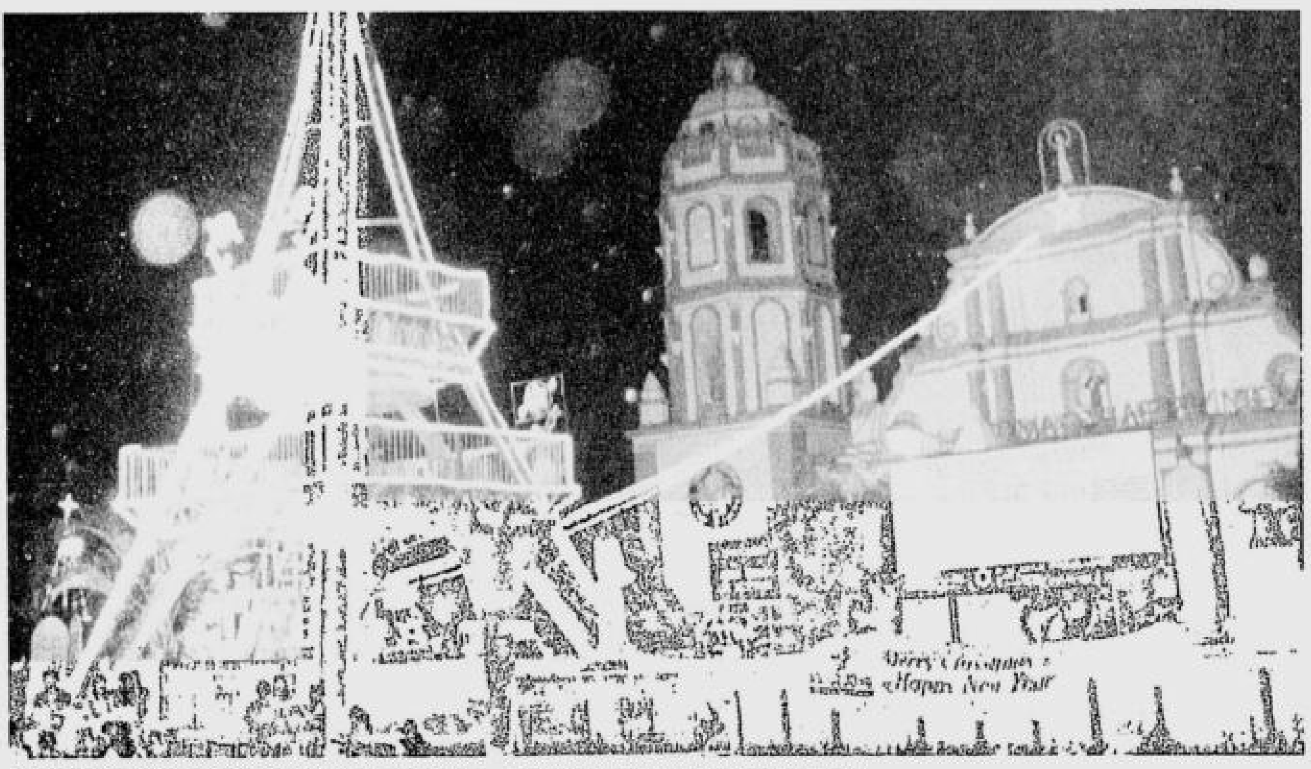

CANDON City's "Eiffel Tower" and church. LEONCIO BALBIN/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

White Christmas blues? Take Ilocos cruise

By Frank Cimatu and Leoncio Balbin Jr.
Inquirer Northern Luzon

VIGAN CITY—TO FORGET THE white Christmas blues, try going on a cruise to Ilocos and just watch the Christmas trees displayed on the town halls.

Some are forgettable and others are rehashed from last year. But there are some worth the trip.

First stop if one is coming from Baguio City is the Christmas tree of Naguilian town. It is a huge *basi* (sugarcane wine) which at night has Tivoli lights running around it.

Naguilian is the *basi* capital of the North and thousands of earthen jars filled with fresh basi are buried to age for almost three months. The jar is about 15 feet long and made of paper and brown paint.

La Union has a 50-foot Christmas tree filled with different-sized and multicolored *parol* (lanterns) lighting in different sequence.

Tivoli lights fill up the spaces between the stars.

Sta. Lucia town revived its euphorbia Christmas tree with the so-called Crown of Thorns of different colors arranged around tree-shaped plant holder.

Neighboring Candon City's "Eiffel Tower" is festooned with S-shaped lanterns and a huge Merry Christmas on the gate of the Candon Church.

Vigan City lets the wind work for it with its Christmas tree, composed of pinwheels in streaks of red, white and blue.

When the wind blows, the pinwheels look like moving Christmas balls.

Ilocos Sur's huge Christmas tree may be the best of the lot with the province's agricultural produce arranged in surprisingly colorful rows.

There are dark brown squash at the base, sheaves of violet shallots (*lasona*), bouquets of white garlic and golden rice bundles decorate the Christmas tree in front of the provincial capitol.

For the top, the tree has bundles of tobacco leaves. Virginia tobacco is still the cash crop of the province for more than 50 years now.

"We want to highlight the farmers this time. Last year, it was the weavers with our Christmas tree made entirely of *inabel*," said provincial administrator Vicky Cu.

"We showed that this is the natural color of Christmas," she said.

For added accent, she added chandeliers made of small white seashells on the nearby mango trees.

Lawyers back Comelec position against partial automated polls

PROMINENT LAWYERS HAVE ENDORSED the position of the Commission on Elections to stop or cancel any plan for partial automated polls in May 2007, as proposed by a bicameral conference committee of Congress.

In a joint statement sent to the INQUIRER yesterday, Romulo Macalintal, Sixto Brillantes Jr. and Pete Quirino Quadra said the Comelec might not have the time to conduct a proper bidding for the machines to be used for the partial automation, and to test the machines and train personnel as well as candidates and watchers on their features and use.

Macalintal is the election lawyer of President Macapagal-Arroyo and of Vice President Noli de Castro; Brillantes, of the late actor and presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. and of former Sen. Loren Legarda in her election protest against De Castro; and Quadra, of Sen. Alfredo Lim.

RA 8436

The proposal, now being considered by the bicameral conference committee chaired by Sen. Richard Gordon and Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr., would effectively amend certain provisions of Republic Act No. 8436, or the Automated Election Law of 1998.

The proposed legislation authorizes the Comelec to use an automated election system for the purpose of voting and counting of ballots in national and local elections.

Section 5 of the proposed amendments calls for partial automation in two highly urbanized cities and two highly urbanized provinces each in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, or a total of eight highly urbanized pilot areas.

The same section says that the Comelec can conduct partial automation in these areas provided it has the consent of the Sanggunian of the local government units concerned, and their officials have not been "the subject of administrative charges within 16 months prior to the May 14, 2007 elections."

Confusion

Macalintal, Brillantes and Quadra said that "with an average of one million voters per highly urbanized area, or eight million voters, the partial automation will require a special kind of paper and a printer who will print the eight million official ballots that will fit in the automated counting machines."

This will again affect the preparations of the Comelec, which has already geared its activities "solely for a manual election without any plan or calendar even for partial automation in 2007," they said.

"All these late preparations in the approval of this bill calling for partial automation in 2007 will only confuse an already confused electorate and even the officials of the Comelec, which will badly affect our dream of a clean and credible election in 2007," they added.

The three lawyers also wondered why the implementation of the proposed partial automation was made dependent on the consent of the local officials concerned.

This showed the leaders' lack of political will in implementing their proposed legislation, or their apparent haste in coming up with it, the lawyers said.

They also said getting the consent of the local officials before a law could be implemented was practically to surrender the constitutional duty, power and authority of the Comelec to implement election laws, rules and regulations to ensure a clean and honest political exercise. *Cynthia D. Balana*

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  b. How can it be utilized for political campaign
    i. Campaign website versus political website
      1. Do's and Don'ts
      2. What to put in your website – how can internet bring in votes, volunteers and even donations for you
      3. Security features
      4. Domain names
      5. Web hosting
      6. Promoting your website
        a. How can you attract viewers/readers and make them come back again and again.
        b. How to integrate an on-line raffle system
    ii. E-mailing
      1. Dos and don'ts
      2. Mass e-mailing
      3. Creating a mailing list
  c. Costings
3. How to set up a call center for political campaign
  a. Basic principles of a call center
  b. Technology
    i. Taking advantage of SMS: How you can generate funds and promote your candidacy at the same time using SMS.
    ii. Software to reduce labor cost (make your computer work for you while you and your staff can do other things, or even while you are resting).
    iii. Taking advantage of VOIP
    iv. Creating leads (call list)
  c. Costings
4. The Omnibus Election Code: Do's and don'ts to avoid violation of the Omnibus Election Code.
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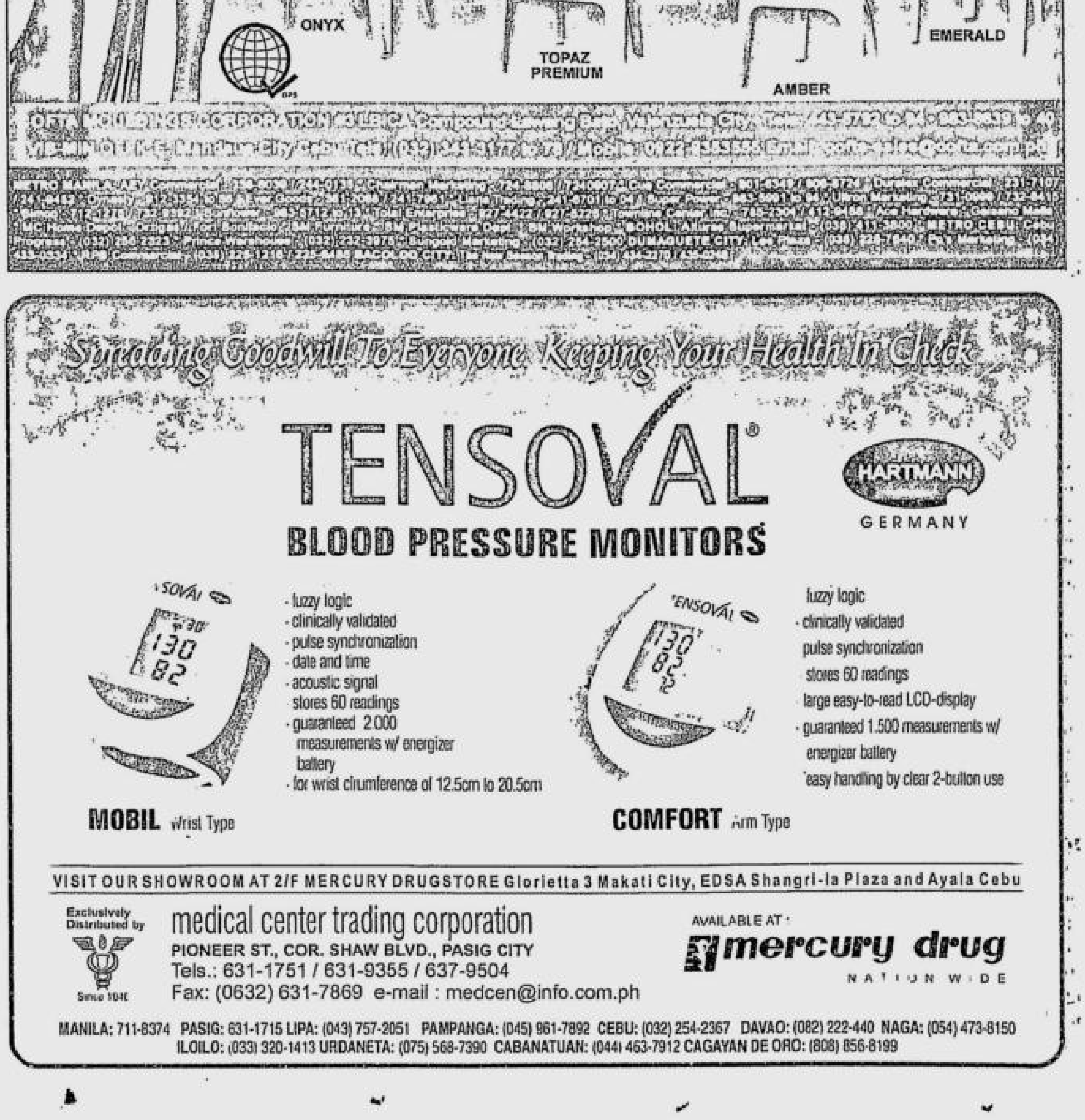
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SHOW BIZ-addicted Filipinos clog Quezon Avenue and a pedestrian overpass to ogle at passing floats of movies featured in the ongoing Metro Manila Film Festival. The parade of stars disrupted traffic on an otherwise traffic jam-free Christmas Eve.

CROWD control personnel had to restrain overeager movie fans from crossi most attractive floats in the parade dressed in red and gold.

Floats stea at Metro fil

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Entertainment

AT THE PARADE OF STARS YESTERDAY—WHICI officially launched the 32nd Metro Manila Film Fes tival—Vic Sotto, in a plain white T-shirt got mor applause from fans than Zsazsa Padilla, who wore red, skimpy super heroine costume.

It's not the clothes, folks, it's the float.

Sotto's "Enteng Kabisote 3" was the most popu lar float in the parade which also featured tw alien space ships ("Enteng" and "Super Noypi" two haunted houses ("Shake, Rattle and Roll 8 and "Matakot Ka sa Karma") and a Chinese pagc da ("Mano Po 5: Gua Ai Di").

Unfortunately, "Enteng's" float ran out of ga near the Welcome rotunda in Quezon City. After quick refill, the float rolled on—just like show biz

Padilla's float "Zsazsa Zaturnnah" was th most colorful and tastefully done. But the engin overheated and stalled so Padilla got into hc waiting air-conditioned van and went straight t Aliw Theater.

The parade, which started at 1 p.m. on Ellipt cal Road in Quezon City, was expected to end a the Aliw Theater at the CCP Complex at dusk.

It featured floats of the nine entries in the an nual film fest, which covered different genre Horror ("Shake" and "Matakot"), romantic-con edy ("Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" and "Mano Po 5" musical ("Zaturnnah"), fantasy ("Enteng"), ps chological thriller ("Ligalig"), action ("Tatlon Baraha") and science fiction ("Super Noypi").

Target: P500 million

"We chose films of different genres to ensu that the MMFF will meet its target of P500 millio in earnings at the tills," said Bayani Fernand chair of the Metro Manila Development Authori which spearheads the annual event.

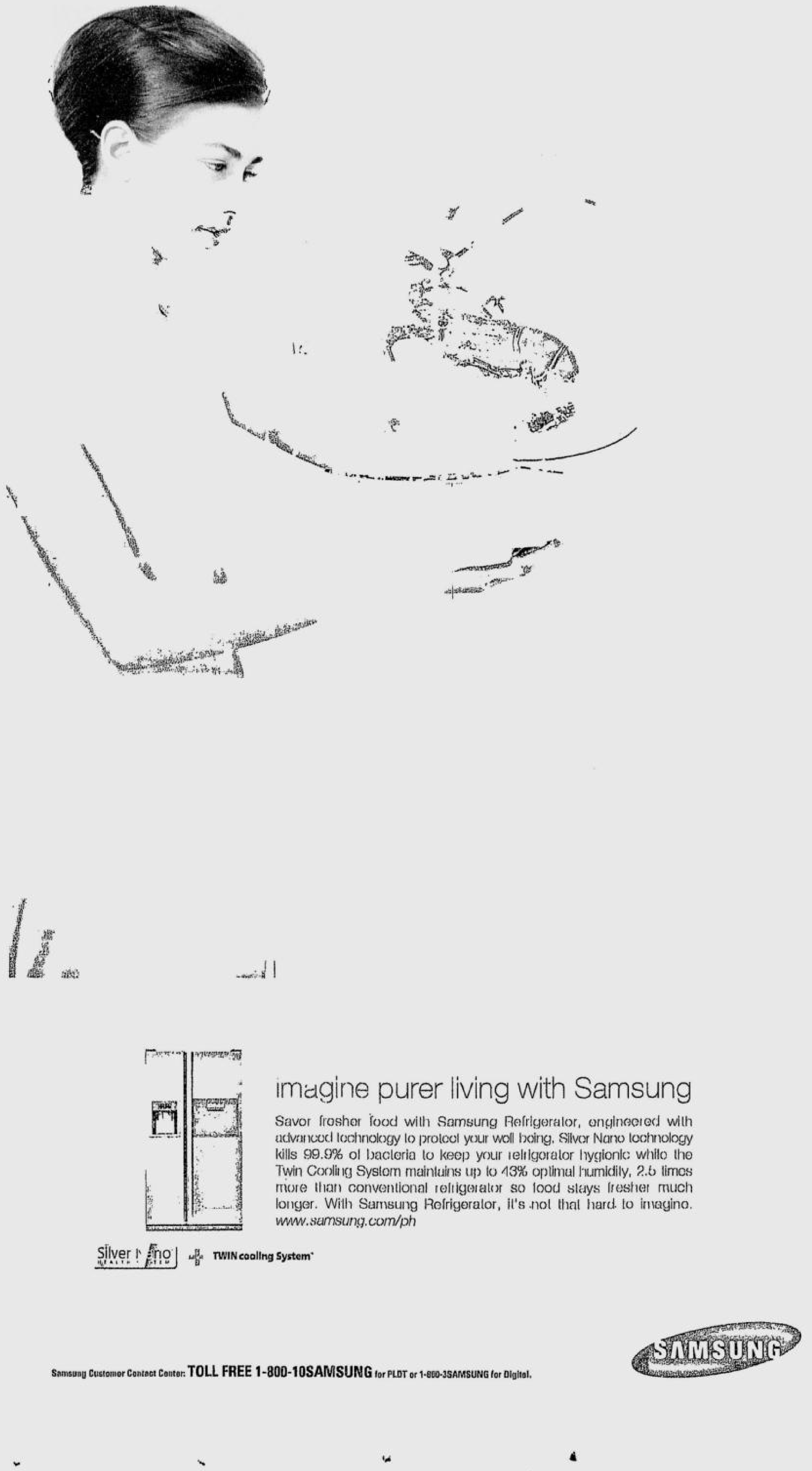
Last year's film fest "earned P352 million i gross receipts, the highest in the festival's 31-yea history," said lawyer Espiridion Laxa, chair of th festival's rules, regulations and legal affairs con mittee.

"There are many high-quality films this yea said Fernando.

Five of the nine entries received favorable ra ings from the Cinema Evaluation Board. "Kasal "Zaturnnah" and "Ligalig" were rated A. "Shak and "Super" were given B-rating.

The floats, decorated to depict the entries' va ous themes, carried the films' stars. They inclu ed: Sotto and Kristine Hermosa of "Enteng," Ju Ann Santos and Ryan Agoncillo of "Kasal," Padil and Rustom Padilla of "Zaturnnah," Rica Perale and Angelica Panganiban of "Matakot," Iza Calz do of "Shake," Jennylyn Mercado, Mark Herr and Sandara Park of "Super," Angel Locsin ar Richard Gutierrez of "Mano Po 5," Cesar Mo

FANS TRY to reach out to the stars of the movie "I Avenue in Quezon City, kept a safe distance from th pavement below, by the flyover's railings.



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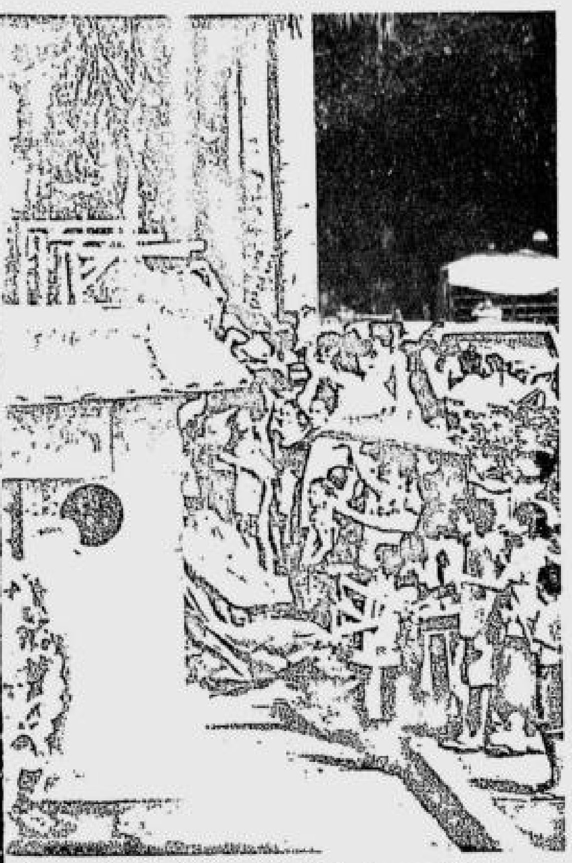


the path of the "Mano Po 5" float, one of the

PHOTOS BY RAFFY LERMA

the show im festival

tano of "Ligalig" and Sen. Lito Lapid of "Tatlo."

As expected, the "Mano Po" float was brimming with Chinese décor (red lanterns and gold dragons), while that of "Enteng" boasted fairies and other denizens of the fantasy world, Engkantasya.

Crowd favorites were "Enteng," "Zaturnnah" and "Kasal" which had an interesting float in the shape of a cake.

"Tatlo" was created to look like a stable with three horses made of fiberglass reportedly costing P300,000.

Fines

The celebrities came in full force because a stiff fine (P100,000 to P150,000, according to Laxa) would be slapped on producers if their lead stars were no-shows.

Twelve days were originally allotted to the festival that exclusively showcases Filipino films in over 500 theaters nationwide.

But producers of participating movies, led by Regal's Lily Monteverde and OctoArts' Orly Ilacad, requested that the film fest be extended for two more days, to include the weekend of Jan. 6 and 7.

Request granted

After meetings between the MMFF executive committee and the National Cinema Association of the Philippines (NCAP), the producers' request was granted.

"It's a big help to us," Monteverde told the INQUIRER. "The additional weekend means more families can watch our movies."

Ric Camaligan, MMFF executive committee member and NCAP president, told the INQUIRER that the "two extra days came with a minimum guarantee"—meaning "the producers will shoulder the costs of operating a theater if it fails to earn the minimum amount required, which is P30,000 to P35,000 per day."

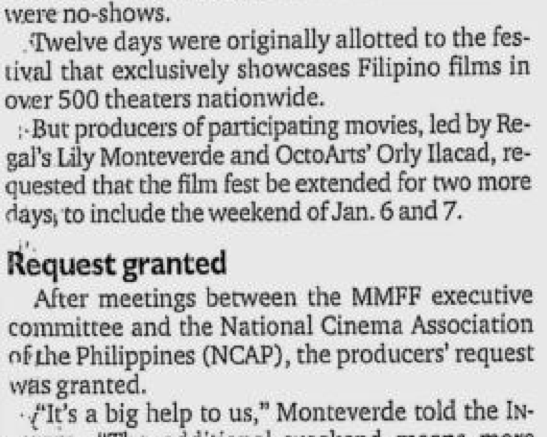
Camaligan explained: "It was Mr. Ilacad of OctoArts who volunteered to shoulder the minimum guarantee."

Film fest organizers also sought to "discipline" participating producers that violated the rules.

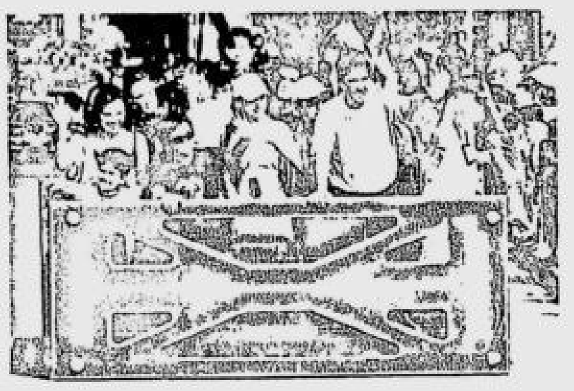
In a meeting held on Saturday, the screening committee recommended that sanctions be imposed on two films "Matakot Ka sa Karma" and "Ligalig" because of last-minute changes in the submitted scripts.

Proposed were the following: If "Ligalig" wins Best Story and Screenplay, it cannot avail of 100 percent of the cash prize. If "Matakot" wins Best Story and Screenplay, it cannot avail of 30 percent of the cash prize.

In an earlier interview, Montano told the INQUIRER that he didn't submit the final script (which he wrote with Willie Laconsay) because he didn't want his film's "surprise ending" to be copied or preempted.



atakot Ka Sa Karma" on a flyover on Quezon eir idols, and death or injury on concrete



EASILY THE most popular float in the parade, that of the movie "Enteng Kabisote 3" received the loudest applause from fans watching by the roadside.

ACTOR Richard Gutierrez tries to return the favor to fans shouting out his name by throwing a shirt to the crowd that gathered near the "Mano Po 5" float as it passed through Quezon Avenue.

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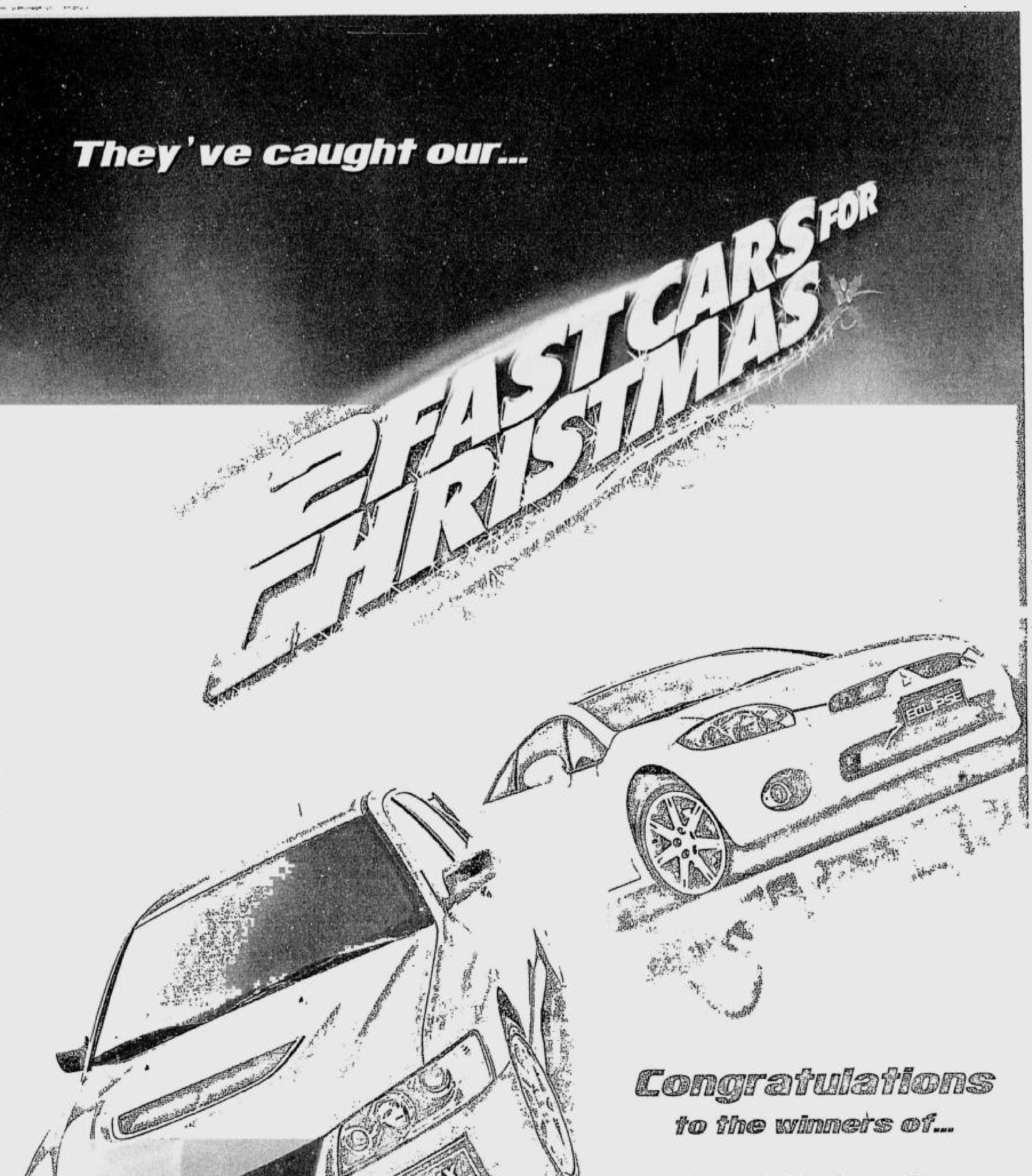

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Stealing Christmas

EDITORIAL

IF WE PLAY THE BLAME GAME AND LOOK FOR the Grinch who stole Christmas, we will be up all night listing the likely suspects. We certainly have many rogues to choose from. Best to settle on a handful of the likeliest, if only to understand their part in the theft.

Our sense of a diminished Christmas is based in large part on our country's rogue politics, which leaves nothing unstained and reduces everything to the most basic and the most base. The true index of the toxicity of our political traditions—the poison in the air, as Speaker Jose de Venecia once characterized it in a moment of candor—was measured early in December, when De Venecia led the House of Representatives in changing the rules, in the middle of the night, in order to convene itself, in a patently unconstitutional act, as a constituent assembly.

If there is a sharper contrast between the selflessness at the heart of the Christmas tradition and the what-are-we-in-power-for self-indulgence of our honorable congressmen, well, we'd be happy to hear about it.

The sense of bleakness that seems to have overtaken this year's Christmas season can also be traced to a force even more destructive than our unicameralist congressmen: rogue weather. The recent rash of typhoons knocked the wind out of Bicol, walloped Metro Manila, traumatized the Calabarzon—and left the rest of the country reeling.

The calamities paint a portrait of nature that is the exact opposite of the vivid images we read in the Christmas story: the nurturing environment, the cooperative weather, the easy-to-read heavens. If the appeal of the Christmas narrative lies in part in the sense that humanity has finally found its rightful place in the universe, the wrath of the typhoons has helped to undermine that gift of certainty.

The sense what we are once again passing through a season of uncertainty can also be blamed on the United States, often described in the Bush years as a rogue nation. The decision of Admiral William Fallon, commander of US forces in the Pacific—to pull out of next year's Balikatan war games because of the Daniel Smith custody issue—reminds us that nothing diminishes the spirit of Christmas like the undermining of fundamental values.

As a democratic state, the Philippines is committed to the secular gospel of the modern era: the defense of democracy, especially in the war on terrorism, and (not separately, but jointly, integrally) the practice of the democratic virtues.

The functioning of an independent judiciary is one of the toughest achievements of any democratic polity; the decision of Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Benjamin Pozon to reject Smith's custody petition and the decision of the Court of Appeals to uphold Pozon's judgment—both in light of their reasonable interpretation of the Visiting Forces Agreement, and both against the very public protestations of the executive branch—should be hailed by any country purporting to spread the democratic gospel. That is a feat that would not be out of place in the United States' own storied history of judicial independence. Instead, we have the United States putting the convenience of its troops above the democratic values under whose name it says they are deployed.

We are not talking of a mere stripping away of illusions, as though it were a matter of finally discovering that Santa did not exist. We are talking of discovering that a friend does not in fact share the same faith.

No matter. Because we are a largely Catholic nation, we should be able to find meaning in the very bareness of the situation. The first Christmas, too, was a reminder that small states did not figure much in the calculations of world-spanning empires. It, too, showed us that redemption comes not in the robes of excess but in the swaddling clothes of abnegation. Not least, the first Christmas proved, once and for all time, that salvation does not lie in the hands of politicians, but in those who have learned to rise above their own selves.

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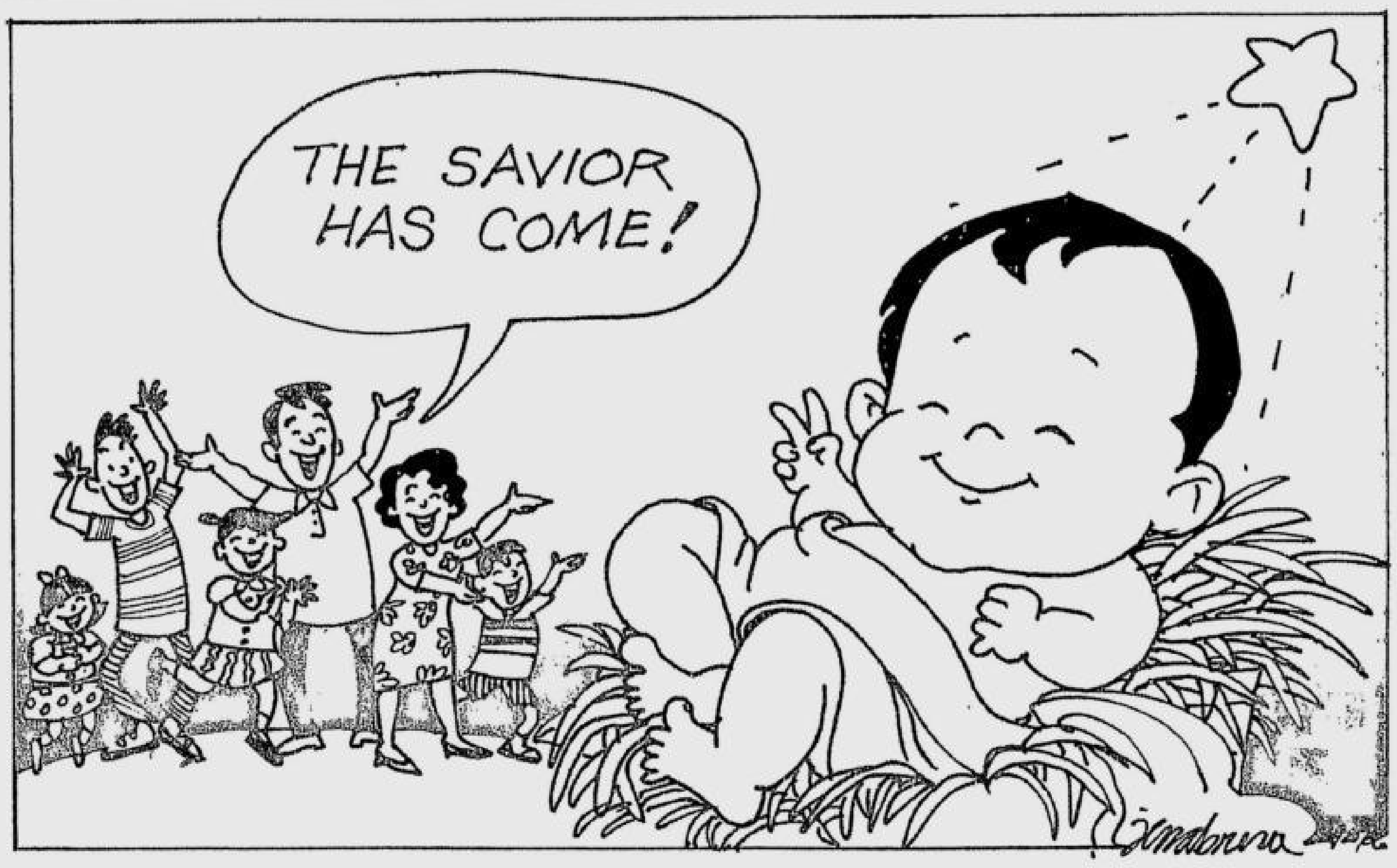

Friends

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYBODY, INcluding the pro-Charter change people. May this Christmas remind all of us once more of the humility of Jesus who was born in a stable, and teach them not to be too ambitious to the point of riding roughshod over the rights of other people. And may they realize that the people they represent do not want to change the Constitution and do not trust the present politicians to do any changing. Our Constitution is still good. Do not monkey around with it. Enjoy your Christmas with a clear conscience.

* * *

Today being Christmas, allow me to be sentimental and write about friends and family and how they bring light and happiness to people's hearts. It is said that you won't know who your friends are until you are in trouble. Well, I was in trouble recently and I am happy to learn that I have many friends.

I was taken to the emergency room of St. Luke's Hospital during a severe attack of asthma. I never had such an attack before. That was my first brush with asthma, although two of my best friends died of it.

In the hospital, they learned that my kidneys were severely affected because the blood supply to them was severely limited. My kidneys were failing. As a result, fluid was accumulating in my body and lungs and, therefore, I had difficulty breathing.

I had known that my kidneys were beginning to fail and I was being treated, mostly by a strict diet, in order to slow down the deterioration and delay the time when I have to undergo dialysis or kidney transplant.

The trouble with chronic kidney disease is that there are no outward symptoms in the beginning. It is diagnosed only through a blood test, and it is found out that your creatinine level is going up. My daughter, who is a nephrologist, discovered it during a routine blood examination.

The creatinine level is an indication of the toxins and waste products in the blood. The job of the kidneys is to get rid of these toxins, particularly protein. When they accumulate, then you are in trouble.

Anyway, I was hospitalized for several days during which time I got pricked with needles several times a day and had to take a cocktail of many pills. For an active journalist, getting cooped up in a hospital room for days is a very boring experience. I read all the newspapers, then read books and magazines, then watched TV till I began to hate the routine. You long for human companionship.

My family was there, of course. My older daughter stayed with me in the hospital room, taking care of me together with the nurses and doctors of the hospital, for whom I have only words of praise and gratitude. My son and his wife and daughters visited me every day and night. My doctor daughter is on a year-and-half fellowship in a hospital in Italy, but she kept in constant contact with my doctors, my other daughter and me.

Still, I missed my *barkada* in the journalism profession and my days in that hospital room seemed to be very long indeed. Until word spread that I was in the hospital, and soon phone calls, texts and personal visits were cheering me up. They came singly or in small groups and we chatted and joked as though everything was all right. Unproclaimed Vice President Loren Legarda came with Willy Fernandez and his wife, and joined Rolly Estabillo of Plaridel and Philippine Airlines in the room. Sen. Alfredo Lim came alone. Tony Baranda came with June Diokno. Many others came, I won't mention their names any more, but they all helped boost my morale with their mere presence, and hastened my recovery.

I was in a hurry to go home and I begged my doctors to discharge me, vowing I would go back as an out-patient. They yielded to my pleas, and the evening I left the hospital was like a day of liberation.

When I attended the regular Saturday Kapihan sa Sulo forum, my first outing, I was greeted with cheers and clapping and, I tell you, that really swelled my heart. But I was unable to host my own Kapihan sa Manila for two consecutive Mondays and asked others to pinch-hit for me. I was in the hospital in those times.

Rolly Estabillo threw a Christmas party for me at his home and all the colleagues that I worked with in various newspapers, as well as friends from other newspapers and the regulars in other breakfast gatherings, were there. Vina Paredes, formerly a sub-editor in the Daily Globe that I edited, called all the way from New Zealand.

Why am I writing about all these? Because I want to show the importance of loyal friends, how they make other people like me happy and glad they are alive. And that this Christmas, we should remember all of them. A person with many friends is a rich man.

So unlike a politician who is so consumed by ambition that he does not hesitate to run roughshod over the rights of other people. That politician may become president or prime minister or congressman, but he would be reviled by his constituents. What kind of a life would that be?

Before I end, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my doctors, Dr. Roderick Ng, nephrologist, Dr. Ruth Divinagracia, pulmonologist, and Dr. John Anonuevo, cardiologist, and especially my daughter Dr. Dinna Cruz, nephrologist, who took care of me even from across the seas. I also would like to thank the nurses and staff of St. Luke's. I am grateful also to the management of St. Luke's, particularly Dr. Joven Cuanang, vice president for administration, and Marilen Tronqued, public relations, who gave me a discount on my hefty bill.

I reserve my profoundest gratitude to my daughter Doris N. Cruz who took care of me very well, even though sometimes the stress was too much for her. I haven't verbally expressed my appreciation of her efforts before her presence (I am too shy), so I am doing it here.

To everybody, friends and family, thank you very much and have a merry Christmas.

God bless the child

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

SOME YEARS AGO, I REMEMBER GETTING A letter from an irate reader protesting something I wrote about Christmas, intimating that her wrath was the least I should worry about: a more fiery fate awaited me in the afterlife. What got her goat was my depiction of the Nativity. I said that the true magic of Christmas lay in that the Savior or Redeemer—as Christians take Jesus Christ to be—was born not in finery but in filth, not in glorious pomp but in abject poverty.

I described in some detail what the Three Kings might have seen at the end of their journey that dark night. There was nothing peaceful and calm about that night, it was a wintry night, the winds howling and the dogs baying fearfully in a land God seemed to have forgotten. Proof of that was that the inns were full, weary travelers resting their bones with the aid of liberal libations. That was why the innkeepers turned away the two strangers who knocked on their doors, the woman heavy with child. The ragged appearance of the two, which suggested they could not afford the inn rates, did not help any.

Proof too that it was cold as hell was that the owner of the barn that housed the animals did not bestir himself that night to check on the condition of the animals, if not the barn itself. There is no mention in the Nativity story of Joseph having knocked on the door of the shepherd to ask permission to seek shelter there. We can only guess at the smells that assaulted the Three Kings as they made their way inside: We may safely assume they were nowhere near the pungent smell of pine and grass suggested by *belens* and Christmas trees.

And the sight they beheld! They would have seen a couple in tattered rags not unlike the indigenous folk that descend on Metro Manila during the holidays, being turned away angrily by shops and restaurants. They would have seen a newborn child covered with hay and straw and whatever was to be found there to keep him warm. I doubt they would have seen a beam of light coming from heaven, or the fabled Star, setting the child aglow. I doubt they would have heard an angelic chorus break from the clouds and set the scene afire. Maybe, they might have espied a little drummer boy in a corner singing, "I am a poor boy too parampampampam… I have no gifts to bring to lay before a king parampampampam," which he did in fact have. But that's another story.

In short, there would have been no external divine or cinematic special effects to show the Three Kings that they had not trekked in vain or were being epically delusional. For them to be possessed of the certainty they were in the presence of divinity, for them to fall on their knees on ground full of animal leavings and lay out before the child their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, ah, but they themselves must have received the gift of insight, the gift of sight. That is what thrills me no end about the Christmas story.

But for some reason, my reader took rather violent exception to this, and like I said unleashed upon me apocalyptic visions to visit my sacrilege. She was unshakeable in her conviction that the world as we knew it was radically transformed at the moment of Christ's birth, so that He no longer wore swaddling clothes, if He wore any at all, but was garbed in regal raiment not unlike the one found in various icons of the Sto. Niño. She was certain angelic voices filled the air, if not to form the strain of Handel's "Messiah" or any recognizable Christmas carol, at least to fill the human ear with the most heavenly tintinnabulations.

Well, to each his own. From quite another angle, there's that part in "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade," somewhere near the end, that is not unlike what I'm saying. They finally reach the place where the Holy Grail lies, but the problem is that there isn't just one grail but a whole slew of grails. Drinking water from the right cup brings everlasting life and from the wrong one instant death. The villain chooses the most regal among the cups, one befitting a king, drinks from it and crumbles to dust. Jones picks a shabby cup tucked in one obscure corner and brings life back to his father.

It's the gift of insight, or plainly the gift of sight, that makes us see divinity, that gives us the spark of divinity. And that is the even greater magic of the Christmas story because I figure that that gift of sight or insight simply came from the Three Kings suddenly looking at the world from the eyes of a child. Not unlike those possessed by the child they beheld. Magically, the Three Kings became the Three Wise Men by looking at the world with the wonder-filled or awe-stricken eyes of the little drummer boy.

It is no small irony in that we are a nation that is especially fond of the Christ-child, celebrating the Sto. Niño with near-fanatical passion, and yet unable to see things with the eyes of that Child. We are a people who are easily waylaid by appearances, who prefer *porma* to essence, ritual to practice, wearing finery to Mass and murdering our fellows with impunity afterward; who assess the world through the greed-filled eyes of "adults" rather than with the simplicity of the innocent. We garb the Sto. Niño in royal robes and do not see the street children strewn on sidewalks, who dream of heaven through the fumes of rugby. Well, the Sto. Niño was born in a state not unlike them, too.

I don't know, but I half-suspect we'll never find heaven by scanning around for the special effects. I don't know if it's there in the Bible, but I seem to recall that Jesus Christ said something once to the effect that only those who become like a child again will enter the Kingdom of God.

Take it from Billie Holiday too: God bless the child.

Merry Christmas everyone.

An invitation to involvement

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

"His future coming was proclaimed by all the prophets. The virgin mother bore Him in her womb with love beyond all telling. John the Baptist was His herald and made Him known when at last He came. In His love, Christ has filled us with joy as we prepare to celebrate His birth, so that when He comes He may find us watching in prayer, our hearts filled with wonder and praise."

—From the Advent Preface

BUT CHRISTMAS COMES TO US THIS YEAR colored with messages of darkness. Where are the hearts filled with wonder and praise? Open the daily papers or watch television news, and you grow more and more aware of threatening darkness. Bad news has become daily fare. Reports of almost daily assassinations carry dire foreboding of a bloody election year. Famine and destruction abound. We feel the suffering in Palestine, Africa, Sri Lanka and Iraq. Like the Apostles in the time of Jesus, we might want to see at Christmas not a helpless infant but a conquering hero ready to rule, to smite, to heal and to triumph over injustice and violence or even just to miraculously transform hardened hearts. But such a conquering hero did not come even with the first Christmas.

The movie "The Nativity Story" is now showing in local theaters. It tells the story of a first Christmas surrounded by darkness. Jesus came among a people suffering under Roman occupation. He came among a people ruled by an insecure Herod fearful of prophecies that could strip him of power. The reality then was not the sentimental and idyllic scenes portrayed in Christmas cards. The reality was of a ruler hungry for power, sending his minions to hunt out the baby that might replace him; and Joseph and Mary in flight to live a life of homeless refugees. And the life of the child ended in crucifixion.

The life story of the Savior born in Christmas Day tells us that He did not come to be a conquering hero. What then? As the writer Sally Cunneen puts it, "Still, incredible as it may seem, the appearance of God's son as a vulnerable human baby bringing light to out darkness suggests that the Creator wants human help in the ongoing work of creation. Just as Yahweh asked Moses to lead his people out of Egypt, and Mary to cooperate in the birth of his Son, we are being asked today to accept this shared responsibility."

In this call for shared responsibility, He leads the way. For that reason, He was born in history. Luke is careful to situate his arrival in a concrete historical moment of uncertainty.

"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled.

"This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

"So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town.

"And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

"While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

The call to us to be involved in the ongoing work of creation comes at a concrete moment in our history—during the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, during the Senate presidency of Manny Villar and the Speakership of Jose de Venecia, as a new chief justice begins his term, as war rages in Mindanao and terrorism threatens the nation—and also at a time when the wealthy are enjoying more wealth and the poor are becoming poorer.

We usually look at Christmas as vacation season, a season of disengagement. But when we look at the first Christmas, we see it telling us not to disengage but to engage. Christ thrust Himself into the history of Roman occupation, into a world of hunger and sickness, into a world of hatred and violence, into a world of injustice and poverty. He was not an escapist. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

Christmas is not a season of escape; it is a season to begin or renew engagement. It is an invitation from God who became human to look at our human condition through the lens of God, and to be involved in it. We are invited to look with new eyes at people we tend to ignore: the street children begging at street intersections, the beggars huddled under overpasses ignored by speeding motorists, the scavengers in garbage dumps and the obscure victims of injustice and oppression. These are people we tend to remember only in time of calamities.

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," John tells in his prologue during Christmas Day Mass.

What is the God-message through the Word spoken to us? It is this: Receive Him; be with Him. But more than that: imitate Him and be involved.

The bishops and naiveté

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

READER FRANKY A. NOYAN OFFERED A RANGE of disparate reasons to explain the low turnout at the bishop's Dec. 17 prayer rally at the Luneta. Another reader, Marvin Malabanan, writes of the "waning influence" of the Catholic Church as a "once-venerable institution."

The minuscule crowd apparently wasn't confined to the Luneta rally. The other rallies organized by some bishops in their respective provincial dioceses were not as well attended either. To add to Noyan's list of possibilities, these are some of what I have picked up from various sources. Some of them are obviously meant as a warning to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and to Jose de Venecia of rallies yet to come; but more importantly, they should serve as lessons that the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines can possibly learn from.

1. The bishops promised that the rallies would be apolitical. But days before the rally, many politicians had already sounded out their attendance. And even if they were not made to sit on stage, there they were in full view occupying front-row seats, unlike the rest of the Catholic hoi polloi and the students from Catholic schools, who were probably obliged to attend under pain of attendance checks.

2. Was it coincidence that those who came were all opposition politicians? A subtle way of the Church endorsing partisan personalities. The rally was not a unifier but a political divider, something that the Church must definitely avoid.

3. The Church has unwittingly drawn itself into the hypocrisy game of politicians. Jinggoy Estrada was there, even if his own father had also pushed for Charter change during his time, although in the guise of the more pleasant sounding name "Concord." Or have we forgotten that?

4. Panfilo Lacson was also there, he who so rabidly talked against the Church by threatening to legalize artificial population measures if he were elected mayor of Manila. Is the Church playing convenience footsies?

5. Church vigilance from political opportunism? By all means, yes. Then, why were the political opportunists there?

6. The bishops had realized too late that their strategies had been upstaged by the consummate traditional politics of President Arroyo when she announced that she and her cabal were abandoning the constituent assembly. Now we know that it was just a ploy to keep the people away from Luneta.

7. Have the bishops suddenly become gullible to traditional politics, both of the GMA and opposition varieties? If the bishops have their gullible moments with GMA, then they can be as gullible to the opposition politicians who are as consummate (in political gimmickries) as GMA is. The principle, not the person. The sin, not the sinner.

8. Bishop Antonio Tobias' exhortation to the soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to join the rallies simply left a bad taste in the mouth, as he did when he apologized to Joseph Estrada for the role the Church played in Erap's ouster.

9. Does the "adventurist" Tobias speak for the CBCP, or even just for the Diocese of Novaliches? Is he still part of the Catholic hierarchy of Benedict XVI? He does not sound like he is.

10. Cory Aquino again and her saccharine views of democracy? Enough.

11. But who has ever thought, except perhaps some of the bishops, that Dinky Soliman is on the side of the truth? Until now she has not told us the truth that she wanted a Cabinet position in a Noli de Castro presidency.

12. Character change for all, yes. But remember, it should also cover erring clergy. So where does character change start?

13. Double standard. The Church incessantly denounces the politics of one while keeping a blind eye on the politics of the other.

14. People are just fed up with the endless debates. This is not the case of one being right over the other, because both sides are wrong. This is simply a case of politicians from the same ruling elite squabbling over the same spoils. The silence and non-attendance from the discerning public turned out to be a powerful voice. Is the Church listening?

15. Will Archbishop Angel Lagdameo be as valiant in denouncing an act of political dishonesty committed by Franklin Drilon? That is the problem when bishops forge ties with political personalities and identify with them.

16. Has the CBCP lost the much-vaunted teeth it had during the people power uprisings that ousted Marcos and Estrada? There are those who say it has not done enough this time, even if a legislative rape was going on in full view of television spectators. But then again, can the Church denounce a rapist as "more rapist" than another rapist? There is the dilemma.

17. Prayer rally? Why, many of our priests do not pray at all.

Clearly, it takes more to be a bishop.

Merry Christmas without the partisanship of dirty politics. A blessed Christmas with the politics of common good.

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Comments to monta@cu-cdo.edu.ph

Rizal renewed

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THE LITERATE—AND LITERARY—FILIPINO may harken to English as intellectual, if not mother, tongue; but through that language the Filipino reader—or writer—manages to achieve a subconscious kind of familiarity with our intellectual language of old-Spanish. The reason for this is the familiarity—and fondness—we often have for the writers of Latin America, particularly Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Isabel Allende, whose books sell well in our country in English translation. Through the late Nick Joaquin (journalist, novelist, essayist, historian and bon vivant) who wrote in English, and whose Tropical Baroque (the style that, in his own estimation predated and perhaps prefigured the Magical Realism of South American writers), English becomes tendrils on a trellis—creeping, growing, ever-insistent on revealing offshoots from the complicated, mystical cadences and phrases of Spanish prose and poetry. It is, I would venture, even in such politically felicitous phrases as Luis Teodoro's "the Republic of our misfortune."

Unnoticed at all in the press, though belatedly noticed online, was a new translation of Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere," and one remarkable for restoring him—and us—to the community of former Spanish colonies, though we have been divorced from them—and they from us—by the extinction of Spanish.

I have never read Rizal in the original Spanish but my father, who did, seemed to have enjoyed it and, indeed, he insisted that a notable characteristic of Rizal as a writer was his keen wit.

Particularly deliciously satirical are Rizal's word-sketches of Fray Damaso Verdalogas: his pedantic, ponderous, dogmatic and domineering characteristics are evident once more, in this translation—and, indeed, point to the possible faults of translation if not done well. For those used to reading fiction in English, and who have acquired a taste for the improbabilities and absurdities of a class-laden culture—the kind of things one sees in novels set in Latin America, for example—this latest translation of Rizal sparkles, which is something that doesn't often come to mind when it comes to our national hero's prose.

The power of a novel lies in fiction serving as crystallization not of fact, but of a more essential truth; in the re-creation of reality in the mind, there to be distilled and decanted to create a more perfect, more potent reality: the reality of the mind, of the imagination. If Augenbraum characterized Rizal as a "prisoner of his own legend," then he has unshackled the prisoner: so that once more he can do with us, "what the ancients did with their infirmed: they placed them on the steps of their temples so that each in his own way could invoke a divinity that might offer a cure." For a society fractured over debating those cures, it does us well to refer back to the original physician of our body politic.

Augenbraum's translation of "Noli Me Tangere" is published by Penguin Classics, and is available in most bookstores.

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Javier de Pedro is an Opus Dei priest, and his being a man of the cloth will surely be condemned as obscurantist propaganda by the more anticlerical admirers of our national hero. That they will do so, without even bothering to read his book, is a crime every bit as condemnable as the book-burnings of the clericalist past.

For Father De Pedro has written a biography of Rizal with a profound difference—it is a spiritual biography titled "Rizal Through A Glass Darkly." The book isn't an easy one to read, not least because it dares to tackle something that remains mired in controversy to this day: to what extent was Rizal a humanist, a scientist, a rationalist, even a Deist? And to what, or whom, did he turn to in the closing hours of his life: to the consolations of religion, or to embracing reason and the condemnation of faith?

I'd like to quote just one passage that indicates how the book makes for compelling reading. It argues that Rizal, at least in his first novel, was a patriot, and not, as some would have it, a nationalist:

"Patriotism as described in the Noli … is rather distant from that nation, founded in German philosophy, that attributes to people a collective soul, a special, immanent, and immortal spirit that informs the destiny of a nation in its historical becoming. Rizal's love for the country in his early life had little in common with the nationalist exaltation that derives from the mistaken principle of unity of destiny and has filled with blood all the paths of the world under the labels of German spirit … to mention just a few; much less was it related to the dialectical nationalism that would be skillfully manipulated by Marxist theoreticians, of whom we can still find a few in rather recent times even in the Philippines; not even to the unchristian nationalism that claims against all evidence that everything alien has to be rejected, asserting that 'we are above the others' or that 'we should be first.' In the Noli there is patriotism, a notion rooted in the tradition of Christian thought, which describes it as a virtue that moves men to honor their country and to participate in the realization of the common good as loyal citizens."

To whom does Rizal belong? The nation, we are told; but for generations it has been difficult for Catholics to claim Rizal completely, not least because of his Masonic associations and condemnation of the Spanish clergy. Father De Pedro does what generations of Catholic apologists have set out, but failed, to do: establish thoroughly Christian credentials for our national hero. Call the University of Asia and the Pacific for a copy of the book.

In the eyes of God

COMMENTARY

Nono Alfonso, S.J.
Institute on Church and Social Issues

CAN YOU FEEL THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS? IN ALL likelihood, one will get negative answers if one goes around asking the question. Indeed, how can we celebrate when typhoon "Reming" has just ravaged the country—with scores of people dead and millions worth of property lost in its wake? And yes, how can we start feeling the joy and peace of Christmas when another political storm, named "GMA's Cha-cha Express," is rearing its ugly head in the political landscape? Not to mention our own personal, individual struggles and pains!

And yet one is reminded that the first Christmas took place in a similar, even worse, context. In the first century, Israel was under an oppressive Roman rule. Poverty, according to biblical scholars, might have been more widespread. Why then did God choose this darkest of times to be born under the lowliest of circumstances? Perhaps the answer lies in how God's ways, as the Scripture says, are different from men's ways. Certainly, He sees things differently.

This brings us to the Advent season. While in the classical context, advent is explained as a time of preparation, it is also a time to look into ourselves. In particular, during this season, God invites us to look at ourselves through His eyes—the eyes of love. We usually look down, underestimate, or undervalue ourselves and other people. Psychologists tell us that generally, whether as individuals or as groups, we are underachievers because of our low self-esteem. We tend to look down on ourselves. We see ourselves as ugly, sinful and hopeless. Decades ago, there was a popular song titled, "Sapagkat Kami Ay Tao Lamang" (Because we're just human). Indeed, that has been a constant excuse for our shortcomings, our mistakes. And this speaks a lot about our esteem for our human nature. We seem to be saying that we are defective, we are weak. But this is not how God sees us. Advent readings proclaim that Christ came not to condemn the world but to save it. Save it from a defeatist mindset that says, "We are not good enough."

Indeed, God became man precisely because God believes in us. He sees beauty where we only find ugliness, hope when we can only feel despair. Perhaps, God became man to tell us that despite our foibles and our squabbles, He still beholds us as the crowning glory of His creation. We are still, as the book of Genesis says, His image, His likeness. We must have more confidence in our human nature then, in our human situation.

God became man and embraced humanity, accepted the world because above its darkness, there is its resplendent beauty. And if we reflect long and hard, we will realize how true this is. We are capable of beauty, of glory, of goodness, of love and of sacrifice. This capability is ultimately what being human is all about. This is how God sees us. And in this season of Advent, God invites us to look at ourselves afresh through His eyes, and to realize and reaffirm the God-like qualities and potentials we all have.

A popular spiritual writer says that if we look closely, we will notice that the nests of birds are made up of dead twigs, grass, scraps of plastics. And yet out of the refuse, a home for the nestlings is erected. Similarly, our individual selves are an amalgam of many things, good and bad, ugly and wonderful, joyful and painful; of the glorious and the seemingly worthless. And yet at Christmastime, Christ promises to come and nestle in our hearts. Despite the shadows or the darkness. For He sees us with the unconditional eyes of love.

Merry Christmas to one and all!

Christmas' other face

HIGH BLOOD

Dante C. Argañoza

WE'D also like to know the concerns of the sixtysomething and above, what makes their blood pressure rise or makes them sit back, content that all's well with their world and with themselves. —**Ed.**

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE GOOD SIDE OF Christmas. But what about its ugly aspects? Are there any?

Christmas is the one time of the year that people become generous to one another. As one carol goes: "Taking time to be kind to one and all." Ideally, this season is supposed to bring out kindness and benevolence. Since this is a celebration of the birth of Jesus, the Redeemer, Christmas forges some sort of brotherhood.

Without meaning to sound like a pessimistic Scrooge, I've seen and heard enough to believe that Christmas does have an ugly side.

For one, Christmas nowadays celebrates nothing but materialism. It is not just a "Hallmark Holiday," it has become a big, profit-making event. It seems nobody commemorates Christmas anymore without the perfunctory shopping. You go to any mall and you are enticed left and right to buy so that you make your own and somebody's Christmas complete. If you do not have material gifts for other people, then you are deemed simply "*kuripot.*" If all you can afford is the gift of love, then you are laughed at and taunted—Ebenezzer Scrooge personified.

It saddens me to see Santa Claus, instead of the baby in the manger whose birth after all is the essence of Christmas, becoming the symbol of the celebration.

Christmas also makes the gap between the rich and the poor more evident. The rich, of course, are pictured with loads of shopping bags while the less fortunate are those caroling in the streets, or begging for a piece of "aguinaldo."

On another note, Christmas has a way of sometimes bringing out the worst in people. Take the opportunistic cab drivers who charge exorbitant fees from hapless shoppers eager to get rides during this very busy season. Some sellers also jack up their prices when Christmas nears because they know people would buy their wares anyway.

Even our local politicians join the madness. They see Christmas as the perfect time to play "*ninong*" to their constituents, using government funds, yet hoping to be repaid with votes in the next elections.

The economic difficulties we are currently going through these days have also affected the way we celebrate the Yuletide season. Because of the higher cost of electricity, many families have done away with adorning their homes with Christmas lights.

Studies also show that depression strikes the highest during Christmas. Suicides peak in December especially in cold regions. People who are already in despair feel more lonely and desolate amid the cheerfulness of the holidays, and this triggers deeper depression in some people.

All these make me wonder about the future of Christmas. I hope it's not too late for us to realize its true meaning.

Dante C. Argañoza is a sixtysomething English professor in a leading Quezon City university.

PRC should have rescheduled the nursing exam in Region 5

FOR THREE WEEKS, AS ALL media outlets focused on the sufferings of thousands of residents of Albay province due to supertyphoon Reming, they missed the sad plight of thousands of nursing examinees who trekked to devastated Legazpi City a day after the typhoon just to be able to take the nursing licensure examination scheduled on Dec. 2 and 3.

When my daughter and I arrived in Legazpi City on Dec. 1 from Nabua, Camarines Sur at 8:30 p.m., after a delayed trip due to damaged roads, the city was in total darkness—no hotels were open, no restaurants, no groceries, no drinking water and no communication facilities at all. The streets were muddy and some were still flooded. (Thanks to a family friend, we were accommodated in a small room to rest and sleep.) Many examinees had to spend the night in buses and vans.

In the morning of Dec. 2, with little rest, the examinees proceeded to the examination rooms without proper breakfast and good bath. The test was delayed because the Professional Regulation Commission had to transfer the venue from Aquinas University, which was badly damaged, to Bicol Colleges. The exam finally started at 11 a.m.

On the second day of the exam, at about 12 noon, while they were halfway through with Test 5, people in the streets started running, shouting about a tsunami. Cars, tri-mobiles and motorcycles blew their horns. The examinees became frantic and moved out of their rooms to seek refuge. Everybody ran for safety, including the watchers. Some of the examinees even brought their test papers outside the rooms. There was practically chaos all over and no one was in control of the situation at that very moment.

Thank God the tsunami did not happen. But the damage was done; my daughter and other examinees were not able to finish Test 5, and they took Test 4 at around 2 p.m. practically under stress. Others abandoned the exam for good.

The examination could have been postponed by the PRC for obvious reasons. We believe that it was unfair for the PRC to proceed with the licensure exam in Region 5. We hope and pray that due consideration be given to the Region 5 examinees.

—PERPETUA T. SABIO,
San Antonio, Nabua,
Camarines Sur

Gov't position on AFTA-CEPT should be reviewed

THE COLUMN OF PASCAL LAMY (PDI, 12/8/06), who is with the World Trade Organization, is disturbing.

Lamy was scheduled to talk to the Philippines and Indonesia to convince the two countries to soften their position on the Special Products (SP) and Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) under the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture.

During the WTO General Council meeting last Oct. 10, there was increasing pressure on developing countries to be more "flexible" on the SP/SSM proposal.

The World Bank recently published its report on the implications of special products on poverty in low-income countries. The report is obviously a campaign strategy against the developing countries' SP/SSM proposal.

We believe that the G33 and the alliances of developing and least developed countries should stand their ground on the SP and SSM proposals which are opposed by developed countries.

Our negotiators in the WTO should remain firm in advocating food security, livelihood security, rural development and SP/SSM. The Philippines' tariff rates are very low compared to those of the developed countries (and some developing countries). We cannot afford massive tariff cuts in agriculture and leave ourselves with no other recourse but to maximize these flexibilities.

Aggressive market access proposals will lead to sweeping tariff cuts across all tariff lines, leaving very little room for the protection of our highly vulnerable agricultural sub-sectors. Agriculture remains a major source of employment for many Filipinos. The sector provides jobs for 35 out of every 100 employed Filipinos.

Lamy cited the impressive increase of Philippine exports since the WTO's creation in 1995. Here's a dose of reality for Lamy. We opened our market to the Asean with our government flaunting on our competitive advantage over our Asean neighbors. Look at what happened.

Our agriculture trade with the Asean members has consistently posted a negative balance, even with Singapore, which is not an agricultural country. Government figures show our agricultural trade deficit with Asean countries in 2004 was $377 million, slightly lower than the $381 million we had in 2002. Our tariffs on agricultural products coming from Asean countries will fall to as low as 0-5 percent by 2015 because of the Philippines' accession to the Asean Free Trade Agreement-Common Economic Preferential Treatment.

The government will give our small farmers a favor by reviewing the existing AFTA-CEPT. We fought long and hard in the WTO to give our agricultural sector a reprieve from uncontrolled liberalization through the SP/SSM; yet, the government threw this away in the Asean trade agreement.

It's time to show consistency in the country's negotiating position, and the government should rethink its position in the Asean, bilaterals and other regional trade agreements.

—JESSICA REYES-CANTOS,
lead convenor, Rice Watch and
Action Network (R1),
40 Matulungin St., Barangay
Central District, Diliman, QC

Cha-cha: exposed 'trapo' conspiracy

THE DEC. 10 EDITORIAL AND the various reports which appeared in the INQUIRER read the public sentiment correctly—the limit had been reached.

The shameless disdain for the citizenry that was the driving force of the Charter change (Cha-cha) conspiracy that unwittingly bared itself in the public eye through the "signature campaign" and many other gimmicks that the Supreme Court saw through; and the callous display of unbridled power foisted on a usually placid majority, have aroused individual and collective concern—then anger.

These ironically have tightened the "noose around the neck" of the administration, so to speak. Cebuanos have a term for this—*gaba* (karma). This *gaba* has befallen—not undeservingly—on the conspirators moving the Cha-cha.

The conspiracy in the House of Representatives, played out for all of us to see during these past months—with Speaker Jose de Venecia et al. following a script and with some prompting from others (potential beneficiaries)—has served as a preview of a unicameral legislative in a parliamentary government and the resulting "efficiency" of such a system of governance.

Since a government of any form cannot be staffed totally with saints, for representative democracies to succeed, they should remain founded on the principle of check and balance, which may be applied at minimum level to preclude gridlock.

The Constitution is due for changes. The change to unicameral parliamentary form should, however, not be one of these. This we have seen in the preview.

—ALFREDO V. ASUNCION,
93 Castrillo St.,
Ugong Norte, Quezon City 1110

Lagman refutes claims in two columns

THIS IS TO POINT OUT THE errors in fact and logic committed by two INQUIRER columnists.

Neal Cruz, in his Dec. 15 column quoted two anonymous (or imaginary) Bicolanos lamenting that Rep. Luis Villafuerte (erroneously identified as an Albay congressman) and I "were in Manila running the Cha-cha railroad" (*sic*) and "didn't lift a finger to help their constituents." Cruz himself admitted that he could not assure the accuracy of his "private poll" which maliciously placed me in his "most hated/distrusted list."

Cruz's column replicated the flawed logic and factual errors in Patricia Evangelista's Dec. 10 column titled "Fools rush in," where she alleged that I was debating on Cha-cha at the height of the typhoon. The plenary deliberations she referred to took place five days after Reming struck. Evangelista and Cruz are obviously absolutely clueless on how I promptly and effectively responded to the needs of my constituents who were devastated by typhoon Reming.

Critics of charter reforms must understand that assisting constituents in distress does not prevent someone from debating the merits of Charter change. Moreover, a congressman needs to spend time in Metro Manila to actively generate relief assistance rather than be "seen" stuck in the mudflow for show.

Cruz and Evangelista may not agree with my stand on the issue of Cha-cha but they are the ones remiss in their duty to get their facts straight before they launch out into a tirade.

Aside from assuring the delivery of adequate government relief assistance to the first district of Albay, I have secured volumes of private donations like foodstuffs, medicines, blankets, clothing and the much-needed laminated sacks for temporary roofing. In fact, I was in my district again on Dec. 16, in time for the latest arrival of a 10-wheeler truck of private donations my family and I had solicited.

Let it be of record that I was on the first available flight to Albay on Dec. 2, and stayed in my district for a total of seven days to personally supervise relief efforts and ensure that the needs of my constituents were met.

On the week of the Cha-cha debates, I was taking personal charge of relief operations in my district on Dec. 4 and 5 and was still present for the debates in the evening. I am one of the handful of lawmakers who have a perfect attendance in the House. The debates were televised but my relief operations were not because I do not need a crew of cameramen and journalists to report the work I do for my constituents.

I am certain that Cruz's survey respondents are not my constituents. Otherwise, they would certainly know the assistance I have extended to them during the calamity. It is illogical to assume that pro-Cha-cha congressmen abandoned their constituents in their time of need just because they pursued their advocacy in the House.

—REP. EDCEL C. LAGMAN,
first district of Albay

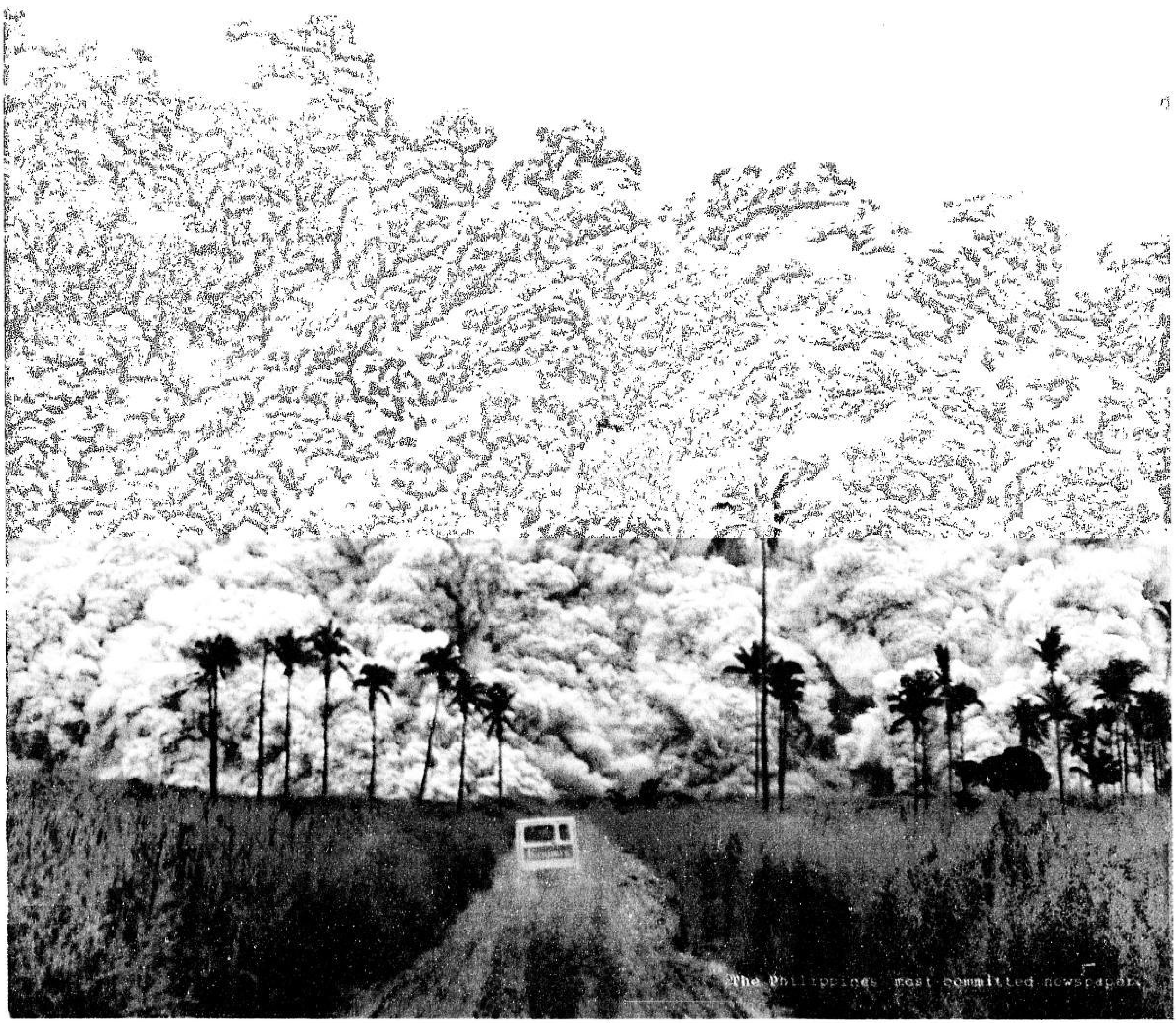
Honasan kin on Isafp's Xmas party

THIS IS IN REACTION TO FE Zamora's report on the "wonderful" Christmas party of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp). (PDI, 12/22/06)

We would like to thank the "Emperor," Brig. Gen. Delfin Bangit, and his staff for contributing to the pain that our family is going through this Christmas season. We are glad to have been able to add some joy and laughter to their holiday celebration, and we hope and pray that someday, they will do the same for us.

To all of them, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

—THE HONASAN FAMILY,
Marikina City



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Bicol tourism picking up, says DOT

SORSOGON CITY—AFTER THE DEVASTATION wrought by two supertyphoons, Bicol's tourism industry is now getting back on its feet and ready to receive the expected influx of tourists this Christmas season and next year.

Tourism regional director Maria Nini Ravanilla said the "ACES" of tourism—accommodation, communication, entertainment and services—had largely been restored and ready to serve arriving tourists.

Ravanilla said they had drawn up some plans to invite more tourists to visit the region and expected that tourist arrivals would not diminish even with the effects of Typhoons Milenyo and Reming.

She said they were set to launch "I Love Bicol, Biyahe Na!" campaign to once again highlight the best tourism sites in the region.

"Even with the devastation our tourism partners suffered, the typhoons did not destroy our tourism sites, they are still there," she stressed.

"In fact, Typhoon Reming created a new history for our world-famous Cagsawa ruins, and although it was an extremely sad story for our *kababayan* who lost their loved ones, the stories behind those tragic events would be part of a new episode in the history of Mt. Mayon and the ruins," she said.

Ravanilla said she was greatly relieved when she confirmed that the original ruins were intact despite the huge mudflow that inundated the areas surrounding Cagsawa.

She also confirmed that the now famous water sports complex, which is a pet project of Camarines Sur Gov. L-Rey Villafuerte, is now ready to accommodate visitors.

Because of the new sports complex, which has lured thousands of foreign tourists, majority of whom were Europeans, Camarines Sur topped the tourist arrivals for Bicol followed by the whale shark interaction in Donsol, she said.

The tourism director said they already had a tie-up with the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board for the launch of an information campaign to promote the various spots in the region through the public transport system.

The DOT head still hoped to surpass this year's tourist arrival target of 510,000 after noting that foreign tourists increased by 23 percent and locals, 12 percent.

The official said the whale shark season was now on and tourists would soon start flocking to Donsol.

Ravanilla brushed aside the recent shooting of a Bayan Muna leader in Donsol as an isolated case and that it had nothing to do with the tourism program of the town.

"It just so happened that the victim was in that area when the assailants struck," she noted.

Ravanilla assured the public that despite all the sufferings, the resiliency of the Bicolanos would continue and that Bicol tourism would stay alive. *Bobby Labalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

20,000 get gift packs from Iloilo city gov't

By David Israel Sinay
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—ABOUT 20,000 INDIGENTS OF this city rushed to the Freedom Grandstand here on Saturday morning to receive gift packs from the city government.

The program, initiated by Mayor Jerry Treñas last year, provide the packs for the needy in 180 barangays of the six districts here. Last year, about 10,000 indigents were gathered and given gift packs by the city government.

Clarita Dignadice, head of the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) that prepared the gift packs, said each indigent was a beneficiary of a gift pack comprising of two kilos of rice, two packs of noodles and two cans of sardines.

The barangay chiefs were tasked to determine the needy individuals who each received a claim ticket that he/she could exchange for the gift pack, Dignadice said.

However, some individuals took advantage of the activity. There were claim tickets that were photocopied and had it exchanged for a gift pack. Dignadice said that due to the number of beneficiaries they were unable to notice the forged tickets.

The problem was only discovered near the end of the activity when about 25 people were unable to get their share.

One of those who failed to get her gift pack was Leonila Jaena, 76, who said she arrived at the Freedom Grandstand before 7 a.m. for the 7:30 a.m. start of the activity.

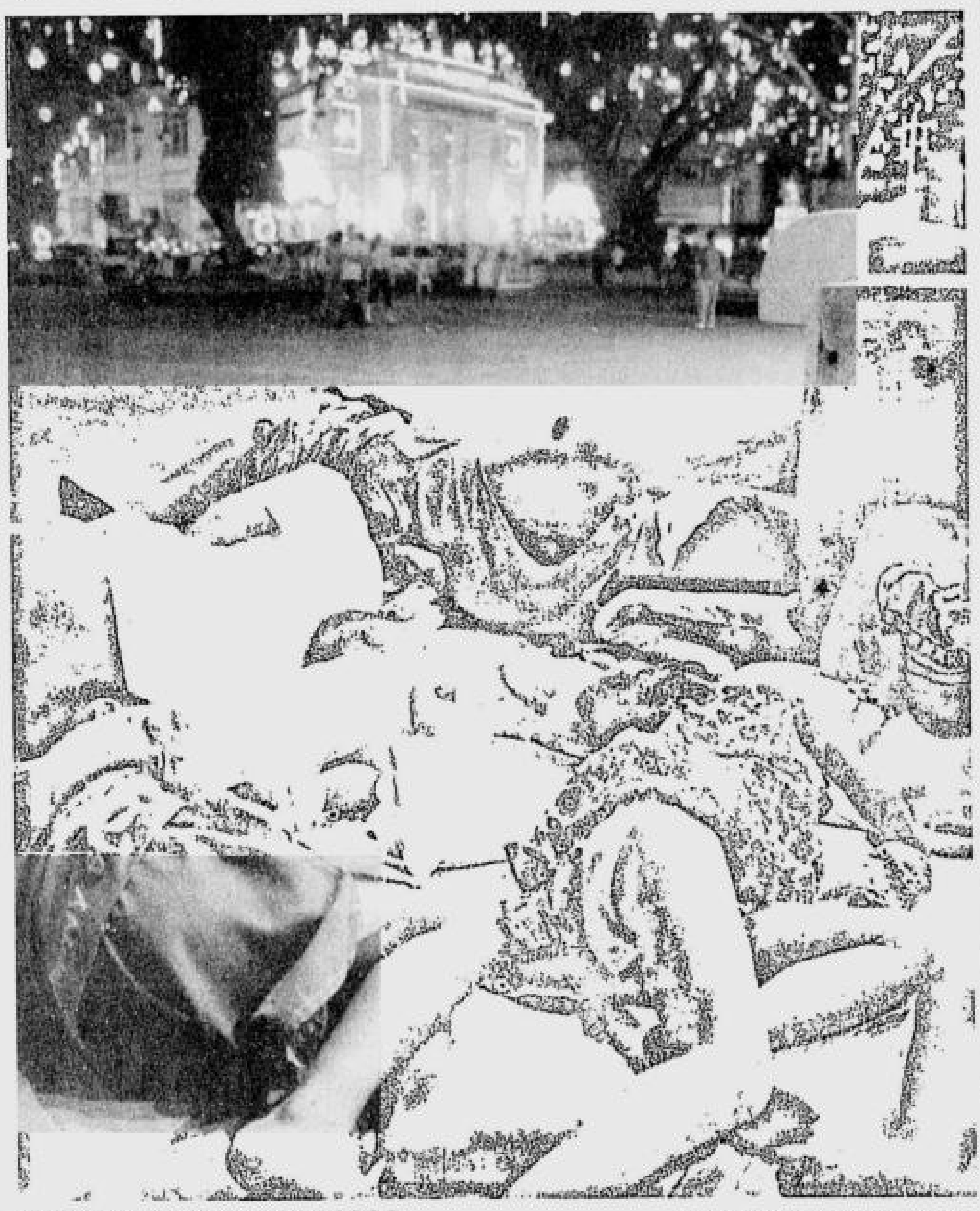
"I came very early but I went home because I was very hungry," Jaena said in Hiligaynon.

After having her breakfast at home, Jaena said she still had to look for her fare to go back to the grandstand.

Jaena lives in Barangay Kaingin, La Paz, which is several kilometers away from the Freedom Grandstand in downtown Iloilo.

Dignadice advised the recipients who were unable to get their share Saturday to keep their tickets as they will be receiving their gift packs on Dec. 28 at the CSWDO.

Last Friday, the city government also extended food relief to some 1,000 senior citizens of Iloilo City.



HOMELESS AT CHRISTMAS
BING GONZALES/INQUIRER MINDANAO
Homeless people sleep soundly on the pavement of Rizal Park in Davao City.

Pollution source of red tide in Sorsogon, officials say

SORSOGON CITY—THE INCREASED level of red tide here, which claimed at least nine lives and hospitalized more than a hundred persons, was traced to pollution, according to local and environmental officials who held a conference on the issue.

Board member Cherry Diaz, chair of the provincial board's committee on environment, which convened the conference, said health and environment officials blamed human, animal and industrial wastes like fertilizer residues, engine oils and other pollutants.

Diaz said the inland water tributaries, which empty into the Sorsogon Bay, were found to be highly polluted with the level of toxicity ranging from 778 to 11,954 saxotoxins, according to the latest water analysis report released by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources on Dec. 8.

BFAR said the normal level is 40 saxotoxins.

A multisectoral team monitoring the Bac-Man Geothermal, however, belied reports that the geothermal operations here were to blame for the red tide.

Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer Oscar Dominguez, who heads the monitoring team said results of a third party water analysis proved that all were within the safe levels.

Engineer Leo Mago, PNOC-EDC environmental management division supervisor, said their operations were safe as borne by quarterly monitoring reports. *Bobby Labalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Negros Or. treasurer to publish top delinquent taxpayers

DUMAGUETE CITY—THE PROVincial treasurer's office of Negros Oriental is now ready to publish the list of the top 20 delinquent real property taxpayers in each of the 20 towns in the province, as a requirement for public auction.

The publication of the "Notice of Delinquency in the Payment of the Real Property Tax" will start on Dec. 30, according to provincial treasurer Danilo Mendez.

The provincial government resorted to public auction to deliver the message that the Capitol is serious in its tax collection effort, Mendez said.

The unpaid real property tax in the province was already in the vicinity of P100 million, he said.

Mendez said his office hoped to collect at least 50 percent of the unpaid taxes.

Under Section 254 of the Local Government Code, the publication must be made once a week for two consecutive weeks, in a newspaper of general circulation in the province, city, or municipality, Mendez said.

The average unpaid real property tax of each of the concerned taxpayers was P100,000, he said but many of these taxpayers have more than one property with delinquent real property tax.

There was no politician or government official in the list, except for a lot that was supposedly in the name of a congressman, but was already covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, Mendez said.

He said the name of the lawmaker was not mentioned in the auction list because the ownership of the land was still in question.

Mendez said that the concerned taxpayers could stop the public auction of their properties if they paid the principal amount of the tax plus the interests and penalties prior to the date of the auction, which will be held after the required publication.

He said a number of delinquent taxpayers have paid up their obligation after learning that their properties would be auctioned. *Romy Amarado, Inquirer Visayas*

Aussie tourists delight in Muslim hospitality

MATANOG, SHARIFF KABUNSUAN—An Australian surfer and a fellow countryman on a study tour have shown great admiration of the Muslims' hospitality.

"We are enjoying our stay [and] have developed a likeness to the people we met," said tourist Cormac Hanrahan of his 45-day sojourn of the Philippines.

Accompanied by Charlie Donely, a candidate for a doctorate degree from Australia, who is working on a case study on the state-run University of the Philippines, Hanrahan said "I'm having a good working experience with the Muslims in Mindanao. Had been to Quezon City, Virac in Catanduanes and Sariaga in Surigao del Sur to surf and enjoy scenic spots, Hanrahan noted to have felt Filipino hospitality the more among Muslims."

The Aussies, who were transient guests of the Lidasan clan from the Bugasan sultanate here, said the Muslims were "nice to be with."

Donely said some people were apprehensive of their visit to the area due to reports that many Muslims in Mindanao carry guns, including other negative stories that tend to discourage first time visitors to Muslim communities.

"They are peace-loving people contrary to reports reaching us back home. Except perhaps when provoked," Hanrahan said.

Provincial Board Member Moussolini Sinsuat Lidasan, host to the two Aussies, has assured the safety of their guests and saw to it that they were more than at home in their brief stay.

The INQUIRER's chance encounter with the Australians here was the recent launch of the Iranon Development Agenda with the presence of the Southern Philippines Development Administration chief Zamzamin Ampatuan, who vowed to help in the development of the newly created province carved out from 10 Maguindanao towns.

AUSTRALIAN tourist Cormac Hanrahan records moments of encounters with Muslims during a forum on peace and development in Matanog, Shariff Kabunsuan on Dec. 17.
CHARLIE SEÑASE

This municipality and the three other Iranon towns of Buldon, Barira and Parang are said to be rich potential for agriculture and fishery development.

Roberto Alabado III, UP Mindanao urban and regional planning chief, said his recent evaluation study showed this town and the adjacent communities to be blessed with vast fertile lands, wildlife, forest, and nearby coastline.

"It's a matter of harnessing these available resources and other income-generating potentials for the local government and its people to benefit," Alabado said. *Charlie Señase, Inquirer Mindanao*

3 hotel employees die in Dagupan robbery

ONLOOKERS flock to the Floren Hotel in Dagupan City as police investigate the killing of three hotel employees at dawn of Dec. 24.
RAY ZAMBRANO/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

DAGUPAN CITY—THREE HOtel employees were stabbed to death by unknown assailants, possibly robbers, on Sunday hours after they attended a Christmas party at the Floren Hotel here.

Police identified the fatalities as Jojo Calamagan of General Santos City; Michael Bato of Sta. Barbara, Pangasinan; and Arcyll Molano of Mangaldan, Pangasinan.

Dagupan police chief Supt. Edgar Basbas said the body of Calamagan, a room boy, was found on a sofa at the hotel lobby while that of Bato, also a room boy, was found at the coffee shop.

The body of Molano, an information desk clerk, was found at the hotel counter. She could have been awake when the assailants struck, and could have been dragged from the lobby to the counter as shown by a trail of her blood, Basbas said.

Another room boy, Jurios Adres, also from General Santos City, was clubbed in the head and chest. He was in serious condition at the Region I Medical Center here.

Basbas said the other employees left the two-star hotel at about 2:15 a.m. after their Christmas party. The four victims were on duty.

The police were looking for Victor Mendoza Dalisay, the security guard who was on duty that morning. He belonged to the Sampaguita Investigation and Security Agency.

Crime

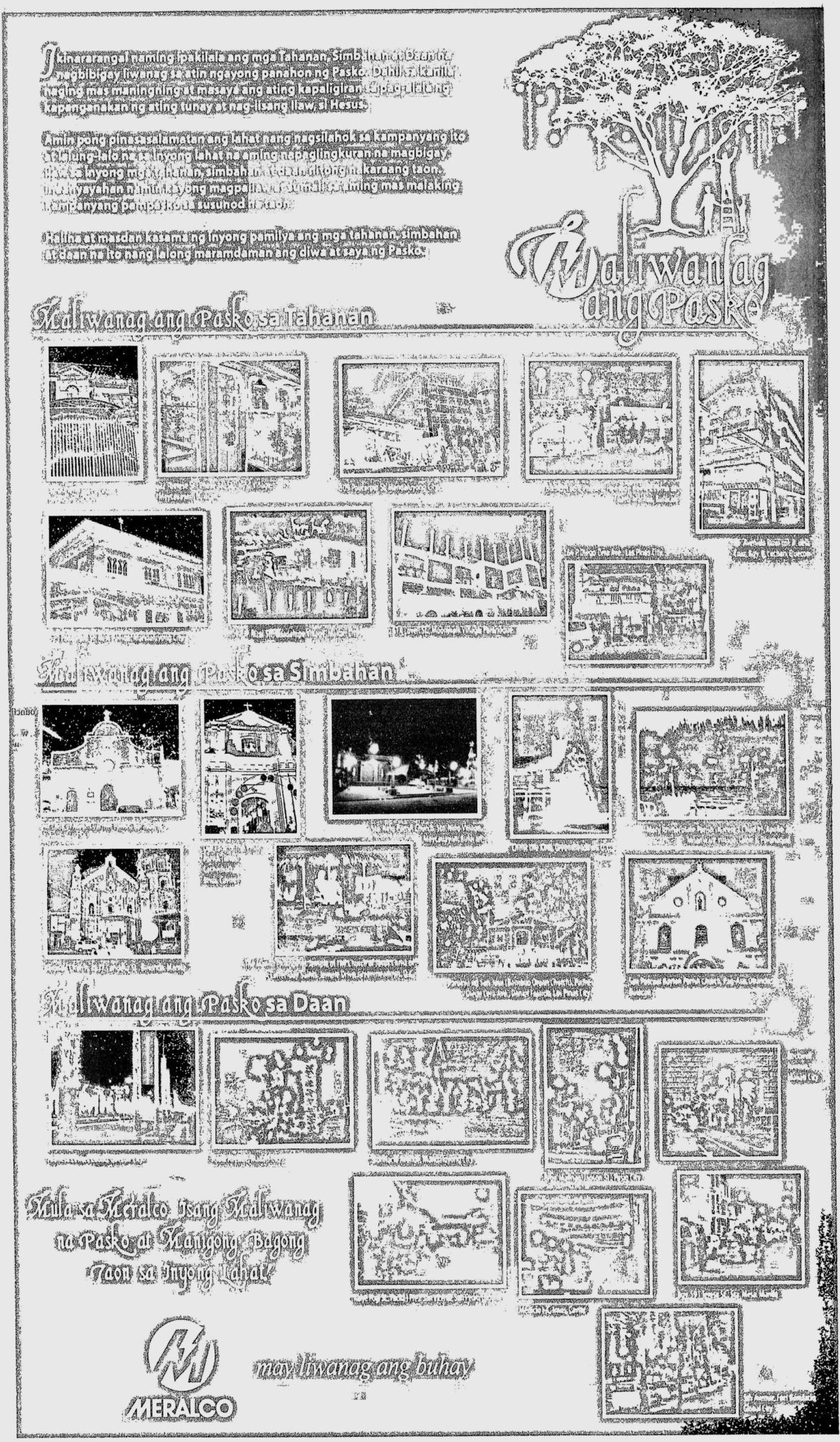
"We have to talk to him as he was present when the crime was committed," Basbas said.

At about 4:30 a.m., a security guard and another man asked a driver of a passing tricycle driver on nearby Fernandez Street to report to the police about "a holdup" at the Floren Hotel.

The guard reportedly used the hotel's back door.

The tricycle driver, whose identity was withheld, was held at the police station for questioning. "The driver reported about it in a community precinct. The responding policemen found the three victims already dead. But Adres stirred and was immediately taken to the hospital," Basbas said.

The police were not ruling out robbery as the P10,000 money in the vault was missing. "But it's a very small amount to kill three people," Basbas said. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon*



Maliwanag ang Pasko

Ikinararangal naming ipakilala ang mga Tahanan, Simbahan at Daan na nagbibigay liwanag sa atin ngayong panahon ng Pasko. Dahil sa kanila, naging mas maningning at masaya ang ating kapaligiran sa pag-alala ng kapanganakan ng ating tunay at nag-iisang ilaw, si Hesus.

Amin pong pinasasalamatan ang lahat nang nagsilahok sa kampanyang ito at lalung-lalo na sa inyong lahat na aming napaglingkuran na magbigay ilaw sa inyong mga tahanan, simbahan at daan nitong nakaraang taon. Inaanyayahan namin kayong magpa[illegible] aming mas malaking kampanyang pampasko sa susunod na taon.

Halina at masdan kasama ng inyong pamilya ang mga tahanan, simbahan at daan na ito nang lalong maramdaman ang diwa at saya ng Pasko.

Maliwanag ang Pasko sa Tahanan

Maliwanag ang Pasko sa Simbahan

Maliwanag ang Pasko sa Daan

Mula sa Meralco Isang Maliwanag
na Pasko at Manigong Bagong
Taon sa Inyong Lahat!

MERALCO

may liwanag ang buhay

Donors continue helping Guinsaugon survivors

By Jani Arnaiz
Inquirer Visayas

MAASIN CITY—ALMOST A YEAR since the landslide that buried Barangay Guinsaugon in St. Bernard, the provincial government of Southern Leyte continues to receive donations to improve its disaster preparedness.

Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Lerias said the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had extended Southern Leyte a grant of $3 million for disaster preparedness-related projects that the province has started implementing following the Guinsaugon tragedy.

The landslide in Feb. 17 this year buried almost 2,000 people in Guinsaugon after a portion of the rain-soaked Mt. Kanabag disintegrated into an unstoppable flow of mud. Only about 900 bodies were retrieved while about a thousand others, including about 200 schoolchildren attending classes at the local public elementary school, remained missing and presumed dead.

Lerias said the ADB grant was part of the $650 million in loans and grants extended to the Philippines.

She revealed that the European government has also provided the province a P48-million grant for its health services.

The South Korean and Chinese governments, on the other hand, have donated heavy equipment, she added.

Equipment were ready for delivery and would be shipped to the Philippines the moment the provincial government completed the importation documents, she added.

The ADB grant was the fastest grant approved by the ADB and the Philippine government. "The negotiations started sometime in June or July and now it's already approved," she said.

She said the province would use the ADB grant for the construction of an additional hospital building at the Salvacion Opus Yñiguez Memorial Provincial Hospital and a disaster management office.

The grant would also finance the purchase of medical equipment for the Anahawan District Hospital and the setting up of a disaster management training program.

The P48 million from the European government will be used for health-related services.

"I am very thankful for the confidence the donors showed to us. It only shows that we have correctly managed their donation for the Guinsaugon tragedy," Lerias said.

Lerias noted that the continued confidence of the foreign donors for the province belied the accusation from some sectors of mismanagement of the aid given to the province.

"We have been transparent with our dealings and regularly reported the projects and expenses of the amount donated during our weekly Oplan Kinabukasan meeting," Lerias said.

Duterte suspends traffic project

DAVAO CITY—MAYOR RODRIGO Duterte has ordered the suspension of the synchronized traffic signalization project because instead of easing bottlenecks, it created monstrous traffic jams.

When the project was implemented on Dec. 19, motorists and commuters started to complain because it prolonged travel time.

For instance, travel time from crossing Matina to Bankerohan increased to about 35 minutes from the normal 10 minutes. The route's distance is only about 6 kilometers.

Jeepney drivers plying the Uyanguren-Ecoland route, which is about the same length as the Matina-Bankerohan route, said it took them nearly an hour to reach their destinations after the P140-million traffic system was implemented.

"If this would go on for a few more days, I'll quit driving," a jeepney driver said.

Celso Gempesaw, chief of the Traffic Management Center (TMC), said Duterte has issued the suspension order after a meeting with officials of Abratique and Associates, the project's contractor, on Thursday night.

Gempesaw said Duterte also asked Efren Abratique, the project's main consultant and implementor, to closely work with the TMC in finding ways to improve the traffic system.

He said based on observations by the TMC, the bottlenecks in major intersections were caused by the "timing" of the lights.

Gempesaw said that the traffic lights were programmed with the same timing, which should not have been the case because each intersection has different "characteristics."

He said that in Matina Crossing, for example, the traffic volume of the lane leading to the downtown area from the south is heavy while the other lane is light.

Gempesaw said they were not certain when the traffic system could be switched on again.

Even Duterte said that unless the system was fixed, he would rather go back to the manual traffic system.

"I am worried because I cannot sacrifice the comfort and convenience of the people in the guise of experiments," he said. *Rizalene P. Acac and Dennis Jay C. Santos, Inquirer Mindanao*

PACKAGES OF JOY

BING GONZALES/INQUIRER MINDANAO

Hundreds of indigenous folk receive food packages from Chief Supt. Andres Caro, newly installed commanding officer of the Task Force Davao, Col. Alan Luga and Davao City Police Office director Senior Supt. Catalino Cuy (right).

Aklan folk rally vs power rate increase

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

KALIBO, AKLAN—AROUND 2,000 Aklanon folk held a caravan and a rally on Dec. 14 to protest the increase in power rates.

The protesters, led by the People Opposing Warrantless and Excessive Rates (Power-Aklan) with government officials, civic and militant groups, and transport and neighborhood organizations, assailed the average increase of P2.10 per kilowatt-hour in power rates that resulted from a power purchase agreement signed between the Aklan Electric Cooperative (Akelco) and the Mirant Global Power Corp., now called the Global Business Power Corp. (GBPC).

Lone distributor

Akelco, the lone distributor of electricity in Aklan province and two Antique towns, implemented the increase in stages starting August this year.

"The increase is too much for us who earn so little," said Portovilla Florentino, 57, president of the Barangay Tinigao Drivers Association. He said they earn from P100 to P200 daily driving passenger tricycles.

Under the amended EPPA signed on Aug. 3, 2004, the GBPC will supply 4.38 million kilowatts monthly to Akelco from its five-megawatt power plant in New Washington town and 12.5-megawatt power plant in Nabas town.

Akelco has a monthly power requirement of around 10 million kilowatts. The National Power Corp. will supply the remaining six million kilowatts.

The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) approved the amended EPPA on Aug 2, 2006.

No consultation

But the protesters said the amended agreement was passed "in deception" because there was no public consultation.

They also pointed out that in the original EPPA, GBPC said it would supply electricity with rates similar to the Napocor rate of P4.30 per kWh, including the transmission charges.

But the amended agreement allows the power firm to collect a higher rate of P8.82 per kWh, which is 105 percent higher than that of Napocor.

Akelco implemented a 25-centavo per kWh increase in August and 63 centavos in September. It has announced that it will implement more increases.

In a statement by Akelco acting general manager Ricardo Ileto, the electric cooperative said it has undertaken "mitigating measures" to cushion the impact of the increase by negotiating with GBPC for a lower rate for un-generated electricity.

Akelco said the EPPA with GBPC is necessary because of the insufficient and unreliable supply from Napocor that resulted in power supply shortage, especially in Boracay.

Aklan Gov. Carlito Marquez and Rep. Florencio Miraflores sent statements supporting the protest against the power rate increase.

Miraflores, in his statement, said there was no reason to buy electricity from independent power producers at higher rates because the Napocor could supply Akelco's power requirements.

The provincial board has passed a resolution calling for the suspension of the implementation of the amended EPPA.

Burden

The board maintained that the increase would burden further the people of Aklan, result in the closure of businesses in the province and deprive many households the use of electricity.

Lawyer Romeo Inocencio, convenor of Power-Aklan, has appealed to the ERC to withdraw its approval of the agreement.

Inocencio also filed a motion to stop the implementation of the increase.

Fr. Isauro David, social action director of the Diocese of Kalibo, urged Akelco's consumers to turn off their lights for five minutes at 6 p.m. daily to show their protest to the rate increase.

Around 600 drivers of tricycles and passenger jeepneys joined the caravan.

Baguio takeover of old hydro plants opposed

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—ACTING MAYOR REINALDO Bautista Jr. said he does not favor the city government's takeover of three hydroelectric plants that the Aboitiz-owned Hydroelectric Development Corp. is relinquishing tomorrow.

Bautista, during a press conference on Thursday, referred to a report submitted by suspended Mayor Braulio Yaranon, which said the city government has no technical and fiscal logistics to operate the Asin hydro plants.

Yaranon's report indicated that it would cost the city P30 million just to keep the plants operating, he said.

"I am reluctant [to run the plants] but a city council directive compels me to proceed when Hedcor switches off power," Bautista said.

Eusebius Julius Halsema, the city's last American mayor built the plants for the summer capital in the 1920s, but the government had leased it to the Baguio Water District (BWD) until Sept. 1 this year.

Hedcor operated the plants for the BWD and continued running them under an interim contract with the city when BWD ended its contract. But the BWD protested that Hedcor's transitional contract with the city government was illegal.

Contracts

Bautista was in Indonesia when the council voted to take over the plants.

Acting Vice Mayor Leandro Yangot Jr., who was also mayor last week, executed the council directive by creating a management committee tasked to study the plants' operations and hire personnel that Hedcor would retrench.

"I would have preferred to keep Hedcor running the plants [under a cycle of] six-month contracts while the city prepares to lease the plants again to the private sector," Bautista said.

He said he inspected the plants on Wednesday accompanied by Hedcor senior vice president Miguel Salas.

Bautista said the city would still need to finance repairs of generators damaged by the recent typhoons on top of the operating expenses.

Hedcor computed repair costs for the whole system to reach P58 million.

This amount does not include the necessary upgrade to modernize the plants' American colonial-era equipment.

Bautista said he had informed Mayor Juan Baluda of Tuba, Benguet, about the city's decision to assure him that power to the barangays hosting the hydros would not be cut after the turnover.

The city's plants are powered by river water that runs through Barangays Tadiangan and Nangalisan in Tuba. Baguio also owns a small hydroelectric plant along Kennon Road's Camp 6 area, which is within Tuba's jurisdiction.

Feud over billboard drags in Clark; investors' treatment watched

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—The Clark Development Corp. has sued an Australian and eight Filipino employees of a firm here over the alleged illegal construction of a billboard inside this special economic zone.

CDC officials said Mark Anthony Lord, a manager of the Hong Kong-based Yats International Ltd., and eight others were arrested on Dec. 16 after defying earlier verbal orders for them to stop constructing a billboard here without first securing a permit from the CDC.

Levy Laus, CDC president, and Denny Wang, Yats Group of Companies chief executive officer, have discussed the alleged illegal arrests of Lord and eight Filipino workers and the foreigner's detention until Dec. 18 but they reached no compromise in settling the dispute out of court.

The conflict drew attention as it brought to fore the issue of how the CDC and its security personnel treated investors amid the state agency's avowed policy of being investor-friendly, sources in the business community here said.

Wang said the arrest of Lord and their eight workers showed a "grave abuse of police powers." He said "excessive force" was employed in their "illegal arrest."

He said although Lord and the other Yats personnel were not threatening to inflict any harm on anybody, they were "forcibly arrested" by CDC policemen who were armed with M-16 rifles and handguns.

"How does CDC's proclaimed mission of making Clark 'investor friendly' and 'tourist friendly' going to materialize in action when the brass of CDC endorse such acts of gross abuse?" Wang asked.

Written notice

He said the CDC has never served a written notice about billboards and that it has never invited him or other senior Yats officers to discuss the issue.

Laus said the CDC has pursued the case in which Lord would stand trial for the crime of violating the national building code.

Judge Mary Anne Padron-Rivera allowed Lord to post a P4,000 bail bond.

Angeles City Assistant Prosecutor Oliver Garcia ordered the release of Lord's co-respondents on Dec. 16 but required them to undergo preliminary investigation on Jan. 7 next year to establish their participation in the supposed criminal offense.

Behavior

In front of Wang, Laus did not hide his displeasure over Lord's actions, calling the latter's behavior "defiant and disrespectful."

"We felt bad about it. It was insulting. We'd like to feel treated like first-class citizens in our land," Laus said.

Wang said his company would defend Lord and the eight Filipinos from all charges and ensure that due process was given them.

"If an injustice happened and was committed and we did not take action, we ourselves are criminals," Wang, a British businessman, said.

While Laus called Yats a "lessee in good faith," he said the CDC was going to "revisit" the lease contract of the firm with the Philippine Air Force.

It was in a portion of that one-hectare leased property on M.A. Roxas Highway near the defunct weather station that the eight workers were putting up a billboard.

Yats planned to put up a high-end bar, the third venture it is opening in Clark.

Laus said the PAF, as a tenant in a 315-hectare area, was not allowed to sublease a property for commercial purposes until consent was obtained from the CDC, the state agency managing this 4,400-hectare ecozone.

Lawyer Bonifacio Tarenio Jr. of the CDC legal department said under the provisions of Presidential Decree 66 (Export Processing Zone Authority law), the CDC is the only agency authorized to issue building permits in the economic zone.

But Wang said Yats "was not privy to the intricacies [of CDC-PAF arrangements) but we recognized the authority of the Air Force and the CDC."

In an executive brief, Yats said the PAF has "given its permission for the construction of the billboard."

Brig. Gen. Gilbert Llanto, chief of the 600th Air Base Wing that manages the Air Force City here, has not replied to inquiries regarding the permit it gave to Yats.

Jose Punzalan, head of the CDC building utilities regulatory department, said in a Dec. 16 certification that Yats did "not apply or request for any permit to construct a signage/billboard." Yats was not issued a permit as well, Punzalan said.

Misconduct

The brief and Wang's statement pointed to the seeming misconduct by CDC officials.

According to the documents, no notice of violation was served before security officers stopped the billboard construction.

It said the CDC public safety division head, Senior Supt. Nicanor Targa, displayed anger and ordered the arrest and detention when Lord, who came to the workers' rescue, asked if he and the Yats workers were being arrested and on what charges.

Lord, according to the brief, was dragged into a van and he and the other Yats personnel were not informed of their constitutional rights while being arrested and undergoing custodial investigation.

It also said the company's lawyer was denied access to those held as they underwent questioning.

Wang summed up the incident by describing it a "blatant example of gross abuse of police powers and excessive use of force that resulted in illegal arrests made."

Targa said he ordered the arrest when Lord instructed the workers to continue with the construction. "He disregarded a person on duty," he said.

Six CDC policemen, in a joint affidavit, said they "advised/warned" Lord "in utmost courtesy."

Pepito Galang, CDC vice president for operations and technical services, said in an affidavit of complaint that Lord and his men ignored the police's advice to stop the construction. *Jun Malig and Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

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Editor **Ester G. Dipasupil**

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'Green' place of worship grows in Tondo

By Tina G. Santos

WHILE OTHER PEOPLE ATTENDED the traditional Simbang Gabi in the comfort of sturdy, solid churches, many residents of Smokey Mountain in Tondo, Manila heard Mass inside tents set up in the former dump.

But they have something to look forward to next year. A nature-inspired ecological church is a-building in the area and they are hopeful that the next Yuletide season, they will be attending the dawn Masses that usher in Christmas inside this new structure

"Hopefully, the church will be finished by Christmas next year," said Fr. Benigno Beltran, the man behind the project. "But even if it's not yet complete, we decided to hold dawn Masses."

Beltran initially projected the church would be ready by Easter last year but lack of funds slowed down the construction work.

"We would appreciate all kinds of assistance as we in the Catholic community, including our parishioners in Smokey Mountain, join hands in building this church (and) doing our part in protecting the environment," he said.

The church is estimated to cost at least P50 million.

"A fifth of the amount has already been raised, so we were able to have groundbreaking ceremonies and start the first phase of construction," Beltran said. He has received pledges of support from individuals and organizations.

The new structure will be called the Church of the Risen Christ, after the chapel that once stood in the middle of the 20-hectare dump.

Beltran, who began serving the area in the late 1970s, pointed out, "As we Catholics know, Christ's resurrection is the keystone of Christianity."

The old chapel, made of plywood and light concrete, could accommodate only 200 parishioners, recalled Beltran. "The new church, on the other hand, will hold about 1,200 people," he added

Also called Church of Hope, Beltran said the new structure was designed by the country's premier architectural and design firm, Palafox Associates.

It will stand on a 2,000-square meter lot donated by RII Builders, a private construction company that

'GREEN'/ A20

METRO Citizen's call

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BROKEN water pipe at same address but still no action from Maynilad for almost six months. Sayang ang tubig. Kung sa ibang lugar, walang tubig, dito natatapon lang. How inefficient.

—DANTE YATCO, 40
39 Apo St., Quezon City

So many hawkers along Pedro Gil Street near Robinsons Place in Manila. Taft Avenue corner P. Gil is always congested due to jeep terminals.

—EUGENE G. PIOQUINTO, 33
Sta. Ana, Manila

Not only is Baclaran full of illegal vendors, it is full of vagrants and squatters who have made the sidewalks their home. The place is totally filthy and unsafe now.

—YAEL ESPERAT, 23
Cavite

Complaints made here at the Philippine National Police Bagumbong Sub-Precinct in Caloocan City do not seem to be acted upon.

—E. ALCABEDAS JR., 64
Tierra Nova Main Subdivision,
Barangay Bagumbong, Caloocan City

Gusto ko pong ireklamo ang mga tricycle drivers dito na kung magpatakbo e talagang humaharurot! Sobrang lakas ng tunog ng motor. Di lang masakit sa tenga kundi nakakabulahaw sila ng mga residente. Sana maaksyunan po ito. Salamat.

—MARITES C. OBANIA, 26
69 Molave St., Project 3, Quezon City

Maid jailed for stealing cash, jewelry

By Tina G. Santos

A MANILA JUDGE HAS SENTENCED A housemaid to serve up to two years in jail after she ran away with her former employer's cash and jewelry almost six years ago.

Judge Silvino Pampilo Jr. of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 26 found Elsa Datus guilty beyond reasonable doubt of simple theft and ordered her to suffer six months to two years in prison.

Court records showed that on Jan. 2, 2001, the accused stole P15,000 in cash, a pair of South Sea pearl earrings and a gold bracelet amounting to P55,000 from her former employer, Merly Dee.

Dee testified in court that she was not at home when the robbery occurred. She said she only learned about the incident when she returned home and was informed by the security guard in her apartment that Datus—her former maid and the nanny of her children—had entered her house at around 11 p.m. on Jan. 2. The suspect then left the following day at around 7 a.m.

Dee said she showed a picture of Datus to the guard who confirmed that it was the person whom he had seen entering her house.

Missing jewelry

A month later, while dressing up for a party, Dee discovered that her pearl earrings and gold bracelet were missing, prompting her to call the police.

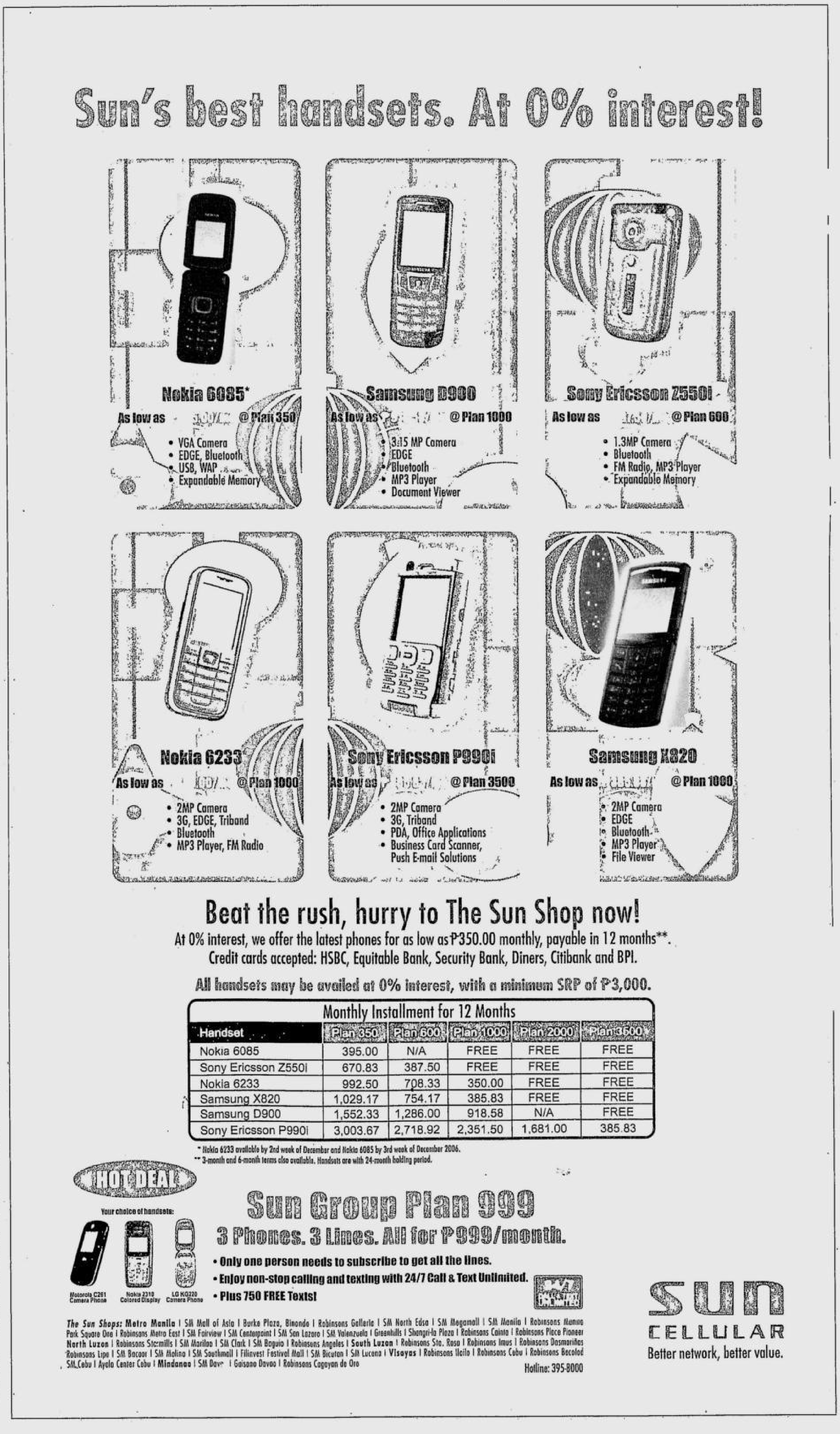
She claimed that since Datus was the only person aside from her family who had entered her house, the suspect was probably the one who took her valuables.

Datus denied Dee's accusations but the judge gave credence to the testimony of the complainant, which, he said, was "cogent, straightforward and convincing."

"It ascertained that her (Dee) narration of events that the accused was the one who took away the pieces of jewelry and cash was candid and constituted the true versions of the events," Pampilo added.

He also gave weight to the records shown by the security guard who positively identified the accused as the one who had entered the complainant's apartment.

Dee initially filed charges of qualified theft against Datus but the court downgraded it to a charge of simple theft since the incident happened when the accused was no longer employed by the complainant.



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Binay set to unveil Makati Inc. next year

By Tarra V. Quismundo

FROM MAKATI REPUBLIC TO MAKATI Inc.?

By next year, Mayor Jejomar Binay wants to the city to be run like a full-fledged private corporation, with him as chief executive officer and his constituents as shareholders.

Binay said earlier this week that plans were underway to transform the city government into an efficiently-run business entity—one that is both profit-driven and service-oriented.

"There will come a time when the mayor of Makati is, first and foremost, a corporate executive and stockholders of that corporation are the residents of Makati," the mayor said in a press conference.

According to Binay, the reorganization was in line with the city government's efforts to maximize local autonomy and deliver on its promises, as laid down in the Local Government Code of 1991.

In the future Makati Inc., every resident, from those living under the poverty line to those who dwell in posh villages, will have a voice and an equal stake in the business of running the city.

Based on initial plans, some local government departments would be privatized, with government primarily tasked with ensuring that basic services are delivered to constituents. Details of the plan will be bared at the turn of the year.

Binay had envisioned his city's transformation into a corporation as early as October 2003 when he spoke before local leaders on "good urban governance and decentralization."

"The present Makati leadership has always upheld the policy of participatory governance and the principle of involving our stakeholders ... in setting the development goals for the city," the mayor said.

"We recognized early on that, for our development strategies to succeed, they had to be private-sector led. Government would be relegated to creating and maintaining an atmosphere that would be conducive and supportive of business growth, and providing the basic social services for its citizenry," Binay added.

Enough resources

Besides, the city has enough resources to rebuild itself as an organization similar to major companies and multinational corporations holding office at its business district.

Business was good for the city from January to October of this year as it posted a 22.8 percent revenue growth from the same period in 2005.

The city's accounting department reported that Makati earned P1.078 billion more in the first 10 months of the year compared to the same period last year. The city's revenue rose to P5.8 billion this year compared to its earnings of P4.73 billion from January to October of 2005.

"Makati's revenue collection has continuously enabled us to provide the needs of our constituents through the services that we render. It has also enabled us to extend help to other localities," said Binay, who recently sent P5 million of the city's funds as aid to typhoon victims in Bicol.

Cops urged to stay sober

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

EASTERN POLICE DISTRICT (EPD) Director Chief Supt. Luizo Ticman has instructed heads of police units in the eastern metropolis to caution their men against drinking heavily during their official Christmas parties.

"We just want to lessen the possibility of problems if they get drunk," Ticman told the INQUIRER, noting that brawls usually erupt between drunk men, even if they are policemen.

Heeding his advice, some police offices have refrained from serving alcoholic drinks, just like the District Special Weapons and Tactics Unit which held its party on Friday night.

No indiscriminate firing, either

Ticman also cautioned his policemen from firing their guns indiscriminately.

"I am warning our policemen not to indulge in the illegal discharge of firearms. We will not hesitate to dismiss them from the service," he said in a phone interview.

According to the police director, he has already directed all police chiefs in the eastern part of the metropolis to tape shut the muzzles of the service firearms of their policemen, an annual police practice to check after the holidays if a service firearm has been fired.

"We don't want innocent bystanders to be hurt in accidents Our policemen should realize what a few seconds could do to their career," Ticman added.

THE JOY OF RECEIVING
Children from different urban poor communities are full of Christmas cheer after receiving bags of goodies from policemen in Camp Karingal, Quezon City. JOAN BONDOC

Accountant loses P1M to burglars

By DJ Yap

AN ACCOUNTANT WILL HAVE A LESS than merry Christmas after she lost over P1 million in cash and valuables to burglars who broke into her Quezon City house on Saturday.

Lynette Desphy, 50, told police that her house at 26 Christine St., Parkway Village, Barangay Samson had been broken into between 8 a.m. and 3:35 p.m. while no one was home.

Taken were pieces of jewelry worth P1.7 million, P19,000 and $1,000 in cash, a laptop valued at 2,500 Australian dollars, and wristwatches worth 5,000 Australian dollars, police said.

The burglars also did not spare a Canon camera and a "balikbayan" box, according to the victim's complaint in the criminal investigation division of the Quezon City Police District.

Forced entry

Based on the police report, the house was empty when the suspects broke in by destroying the iron gate.

Apparently knowing where to look, they went directly to the bedroom where they carted away the cash and valuables kept in cabinets, said case investigator PO3 Leo Tabuena.

The burglary was discovered only when Desphy and other members of the household came home in the afternoon, Tabuena added.

Desphy immediately reported the theft to police. Senior Insp. Liza Rillo of the crime laboratory section processed the scene for evidence.

Zero FMD cases in Munti this year

By Jocelyn R. Uy

RESIDENTS OF MUNTINLUPA CITY CAN feast on lechon this holiday season without having to worry about getting sick.

The Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) has certified the city as a foot-and-mouth disease protected zone after no cases of the dreaded virus were recorded in the area this year, the City Veterinary Office (CVO) reported yesterday.

FMD is a viral disease that afflicts pigs, cattle, carabaos, goats and other cloven-footed animals.

Although the virus cannot be transmitted to humans, eating contaminated meat may cause food poisoning or diarrhea.

The CVO has attributed the city's FMD-protected zone status to its free mass vaccination of hogs and livestock as well as an intensive information campaign on the proper ways of raising pigs in cooperation with the National FMD Task Force of the BAI.

At present, the city has 103 swine raisers taking care of 1,000 hogs, 874 of which have already been vaccinated.

The last FMD outbreak in the city was recorded two years ago. According to the CVO, the city's status would be upgraded to FMD-free zone if no cases would be recorded in the next five years.

P5-M fake jeans seized in Pasay

By Tina G. Santos

SOME P5 MILLION WORTH OF FAKE Lee jeans were seized by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) during a series of raids in Pasay City recently.

Raided were the retail outlets and stockroom of Jessica C. Mamangon RTW Shop at Sunnyline Shopping Center and Galleria Baclaran Shopping Mall on Taft Avenue, Pasay City.

Agents of the NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division (IPRD) also swooped down on C.M. Lacang General Merchandise's stalls and stockrooms—all located at Galleria Baclaran Shopping Mall.

Seized from the establishments were 3,232 pieces of counterfeit Lee jeans.

IPRD chief Jose Justo Yap said they had received information that the owners of the establishments were selling fake Lee pants.

NBI agents monitored the operations of the establishments and later confirmed that the information was correct.

Yap said owners of the erring firms will be charged with violating Section 155 (trademark infringement) in relation to Section 170 of Republic Act 8293.

HELLO!
A woman is oblivious to her surroundings, including a couple who are snuggling right beside her, as she sits comfortably on a bench while talking nonstop on her cell phone. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

METROBRIEFS

Fake video equipment

AGENTS of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) seized hundreds of fake Sony PlayStation products from computer shops in the cities of Antipolo and Angeles during simultaneous raids on Dec. 18. The NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division (IPRD) operatives raided www.pspturbo.com on Susanan St., Diamond Village, Balibago, Angeles City, Pampanga, and an establishment located at 23 Peter St., Filinvest East Subdivision, Marcos Highway, Antipolo City, Rizal. Establishment owners Louie and Ana Liza Alcantara and James Calvelo now face charges for unfair competition and trademark infringement. NBI agents confiscated two sets of personal computers used in the illegal sale and distribution of counterfeit Sony PlayStation Portable (PSP) products; 22 DVDs containing PSP games; seven PlayStation 2 (PS2) CD-ROM games; two CD drivers; 72 blank CD cases; 45 PS2 labels; a PS2 player and a PS2 console. NBI IPRD chief Jose Justo Yap said the seized items were worth at least P250,000.

Calling QC taxpayers

STARTING next month, the Quezon City government will open its income-generating offices on weekends to accommodate taxpayers. City Treasurer Victor B. Endriga said that the Treasurer's Office would be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturdays and Sunday, without lunch breaks, for city taxpayers who have until Jan. 20 to settle their obligations. Those who pay beyond the deadline will be slapped a 25 percent surcharge and a two percent monthly interest rate. Last year, Quezon City collected over P150 million in tax payments during the first two weeks of January.

DID YOU KNOW

KNOWN for its art deco style, the Manila Metropolitan Theater at Liwasang Bonifacio used to be known as the "grand dame" of theaters in Manila. The "Met," inaugurated on Dec. 10, 1931, was the work of architect Juan Arellano. It could seat 1,670 persons, and was a venue for operas, competitions and plays.

The Met was damaged by the war in 1945 and became a boxing arena, motel, basketball court, warehouse and home to informal settlers. It was renovated in 1978 under the guidance of Otililio Arellano, the original architect's nephew. But the Met saw its final performance in 1996, after which it suffered neglect. Its roof is now riddled with holes, while the stage is littered with debris.

In June 2005, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Government Service Insurance System and City of Manila signed a work and action plan to restore the Met to its 1978 version.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

'Green' place of worship grows in Tondo

From page A19

has partnered with the government to develop the area.

Solar panels

The country's first nature-friendly church will have solar panels to convert sunlight into electricity, a water catchment system to collect rainfall for watering the garden, waterless composting toilets and natural air ventilation systems, the parish priest said.

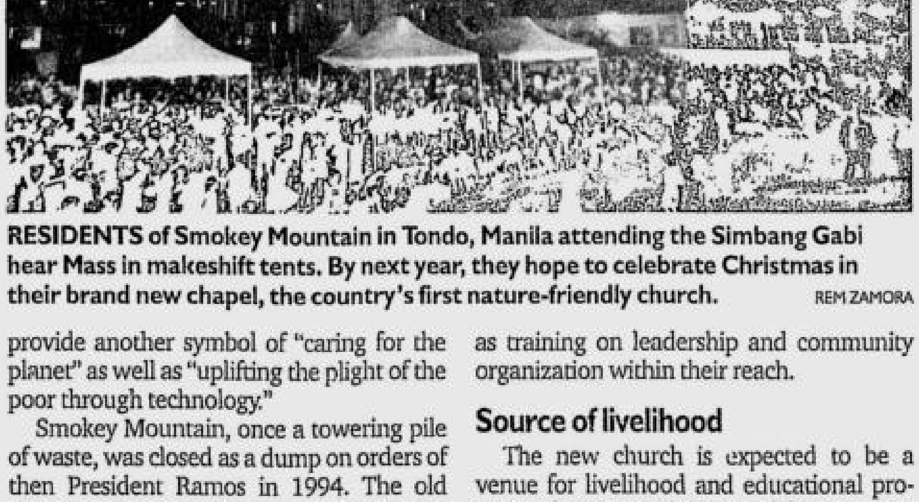
He added that the church would be built from hollow blocks containing residual waste from old computers. "We would also use coco diesel to run the parish's generators. We'll see to it that everything we use would not harm the environment."

In a previous interview with the INQUIRER, Beltran said he got the idea for an environment-friendly church a few years ago from an article published in Time magazine.

The solar panels, rainfall collection systems and waterless composting toilets were patterned after the Philip Merrill Environmental Center in Annapolis, Maryland, which according to the article, "epitomizes the new wave of green architecture, a catch-all term for design and construction practices that take into account a whole checklist of environmental goals."

Caring for the planet

Beltran said the green church aimed to provide another symbol of "caring for the planet" as well as "uplifting the plight of the poor through technology."



RESIDENTS of Smokey Mountain in Tondo, Manila attending the Simbang Gabi hear Mass in makeshift tents. By next year, they hope to celebrate Christmas in their brand new chapel, the country's first nature-friendly church. REM ZAMORA

Smokey Mountain, once a towering pile of waste, was closed as a dump on orders of then President Ramos in 1994. The old church and the shanties around it were also torn down to make way for the construction of 21 low-cost medium-rise buildings.

"I knew then that the time will come when a new church would replace the one we lost. That time has come," Beltran said.

Apart from having access to better quarters, the 2,520 families in the area will also have socio-civic, nongovernment and church-initiated livelihood projects, as well as training on leadership and community organization within their reach.

Source of livelihood

The new church is expected to be a venue for livelihood and educational programs for its parishioners of former scavengers and slum dwellers.

The church roof, for instance, will shelter a greenhouse for vegetables that will be sold to residents at affordable prices.

"It would also house a variety of enterprises, including bag and soap-making, that would be beneficial to women in the community," Beltran said.

The church basement, on the other hand, would have a daycare center and computer-based learning venue for out-of-school youths.

According to Beltran, hundreds of poor, young people are now undergoing computer training so they can work and do business on line.

E-trade network

"It's called the e-trading network. It will link our parish to other parishes with farm cooperatives, allowing poor people in the city to work with those in the countryside," he added.

The church would also be the first digital church that is Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) capable, Beltran proudly said.

He said the church and civil society had the responsibility to prepare the poor for the cyber age so they could benefit from globalization.

"Globalization is only (bad for) those who aren't prepared for it," he stressed. "That's what we're doing, we're preparing them for it. It's our way of telling people that God loves them. If you tell them that God loves them and their stomachs are empty, then they'll turn away from you."

Despite the shortage of funds, Beltran said the community supporting the green church was determined to create a symbol of hope for the youth and the poverty-stricken communities around the area.

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Security Council slaps sanctions on Iran

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN SECURITY COUNcil has voted unanimously to impose sanctions on Iran's trade in sensitive nuclear materials and technology in an effort to stop enrichment work that could be used in bombs.

"Today we are placing Iran in the small category of states under Security Council sanctions," acting US Ambassador Alejandro Wolff told the council before Saturday's 15-0 vote, which followed two months of tough negotiations.

Iran, which refused to end its uranium enrichment work in exchange for economic incentives earlier this year, immediately condemned the resolution as illegal and said it would not affect its "peaceful" nuclear program.

China immediately called for a resumption of talks to attempt to defuse the confrontation.

A Foreign Ministry statement on Sunday said that, while Beijing backed the UN resolution to punish Tehran, it did not think sanctions would bring a permanent solution to the problem.

The resolution demands Iran end all research on uranium enrichment, which can produce fuel for nuclear power plants as well as for bombs, and halt all research and development on methods of producing or delivering atomic weapons.

The thrust of the sanctions is a ban on imports and exports of dangerous materials and technology relating to uranium enrichment, reprocessing and heavy-water reactors, as well as ballistic missile delivery systems.

The measure is less restrictive than the original draft, drawn up by Britain, France and Germany, due to Russian objections. A ban on Iran's oil exports was not considered.

In Tehran, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mohammad Ali Hosseini told state-run television the resolution "cannot affect or limit Iran's peaceful nuclear activities but will discredit the decisions of the Security Council."

He said Iran would continue to install 3,000 centrifuge units at Natanz, the site of a uranium enrichment plant. *Reuters*

Uranium stolen in India; major hunt launched

RANCHI, INDIA—A CONTAINER PACKED with radioactive material has been stolen from a fortified research facility in eastern India, prompting a major hunt and fears of contamination, officials said Saturday.

"It carries uranium and radiation and could have an adverse effect in an area of 1.5 km," Jharkhand Chief Minister Madhu Khoda warned.

Khoda said the uranium was stolen nearly three weeks ago after being moved to a research site at the densely-populated town of Rajrappa from a federal atomic facility near Mumbai.

The United States and India this month signed a landmark atomic energy deal to give India access to western technology and nuclear fuel, despite warnings from critics that demand tighter security measures to prevent proliferation.

Khoda did not say to what degree the uranium was enriched to, although an official from Jharkhand's Central Mine Planning and Development Institute (CMPDI) said the missing material was not highly-enriched.

"It was not highly-enriched but neither was it just yellow cake (uranium ore) and it was meant for a project but we can't talk about that," the official from the Ranchi-based CMPDI said on condition he not be named.

"It's useless in the hands of unskilled people," the official said without elaborating. The capsule was stolen from a CMPDI-run facility.

Rajrappa police said they were alerted to the theft on Dec. 4.

Arjun Munda, an opposition leader in Jharkhand's legislative assembly, demanded speedy action. *AFP*

In US, Catholic leaders forced to sell churches

A VISISTOR prays in front of a ceramic Baby Jesus in the Church of the Nativity, traditionally believed to be the birthplace of Jesus Christ, in the West Bank town Bethlehem, Dec. 22. Israel has said it would ease travel restrictions to allow pilgrims to celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem. AP

MILWAUKEE—FOR SALE: A CHARMING, well-maintained building with high ceilings and classic architecture. Enjoy 38,000 square feet (3,420 sqm) of space, minutes from downtown. Altars, bells and stained glass not included. Asking price: $4 million.

Population shifts, declining Mass attendance and a shortage of priests in many areas have forced Roman Catholic leaders to consolidate parishes and sell off churches.

But selling a house of worship is no easy task. Priests must placate parishioners upset by the sale and find a buyer who will respect the building's history.

Parishioners in Pittsburgh were riled in 1996 when the former St. John the Baptist Church became The Church Brew Works, a restaurant that brews beer near where an altar once stood.

"The issue wasn't the beer," said Ronald P. Lengwin, spokesperson for the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh. "The issue was that we were told by the parish all sacred items had been removed before the sale. We found out later they had not been removed."

Two of Milwaukee's 216 Catholic churches are on the market. Eight have been sold since 2000. Three of the 134 Catholic churches in the Wisconsin capital of Madison are for sale after parishes merged, according to Brent King, spokesperson for the Diocese of Madison.

Churches nationwide are undergoing similar changes.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Boston put 60 churches up for sale in 2004, many of which were converted into condominiums. The North Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church in Marion, Ind., has sold 30 churches in the past 14 years.

Most churches are sold to other denominations with growing membership. But in some cases, religious leaders have been forced to seek buyers in the commercial market.

St. Stephen Catholic Church in Milwaukee, built in 1847, sits about a mile from the Milwaukee airport and faces an adult lounge and a parking lot. The Rev. Richard Liska placed a "For Sale By Owner" sign in front of his brown brick church three years ago.

His parish hopes to relocate to a more appropriate setting, but Liska acknowledged the move could be hard for families who have celebrated baptisms, weddings and funerals there for generations.

"Part of the reason to relocate is to go to more of a people setting rather than an industrial or commercial setting," Liska said. "Still, I think parishioners would lament. When something has been a part of your life for a long time, there's lament."

Also, buyers are often intimidated by the cost of adapting a church for residential or commercial use, religious leaders said. The buildings tend to have high heating and cooling costs because of their towering ceilings and large open spaces.

And sales restrictions can limit the pool of prospective buyers, Liska said.

"We would not sell the property to anyone who would be using it for a purpose contrary to the nature, purpose or morality of a church," he said, mentioning an abortion clinic as one example of a forbidden purpose.

Church officials typically hire real estate agents or rely on worshippers to spread news of the sale. But one Internet-savvy congregation in central Indiana used eBay last year to sell its church to a Florida man who planned to convert it into a summer home. The 7,000-square-foot (630-sqm) church sold for $40,600, delighting Fr. Randy Davis who expected it would fetch only $5,000 to $15,000 because it was in Redkey, a bedroom community of 1,200. *AP*

IMF to quit Sri Lanka

COLOMBO—THE INTERNAtional Monetary Fund announced Sunday it was closing its office in Sri Lanka from next month as the embattled island no longer had a borrowing program with them.

"The decision reflects the evolving nature of the IMF's relationship with Sri Lanka, with Sri Lanka no longer having a program with the IMF," the fund's senior resident representative for Sri Lanka, Luis Valdivieso said in a statement.

The Washington-based fund will continue to maintain a close relationship with Sri Lanka, with staff visiting regularly to exchange views with the authorities, he said.

On Friday, the fund warned Sri Lanka to settle its long running ethnic conflict that has claimed over 60,000 lives since 1972.

"Sri Lanka's near- and medium-term economic prospects depend critically on progress on the peace front and on implementing essential reforms," IMF said in its annual review known as the Article IV consultations.

Military confrontations between government forces and Tamil Tiger rebels intensified recently, claiming over 3,600 lives in the past year, and there has been no progress in attempts to settle the conflict through negotiations. *AFP*

Hints of illicit desire Freud did not repress

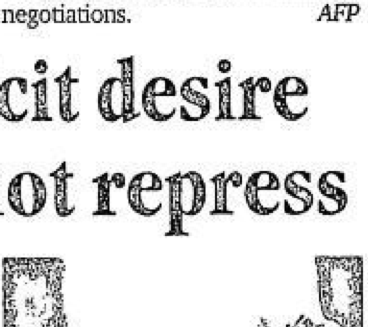
MAYBE IT WAS JUST A FREUDIan slip. Or a case of hiding in plain sight.

Either way, Sigmund Freud, scribbling in a Swiss hotel register, appears to have left the answer to a question that has titillated scholars for much of the last century: Did he have an affair with his wife's younger sister, Minna Bernays?

Rumors of a romantic liaison between Freud and his sister-in-law, who lived with the Freuds, have persisted despite staunch denials by Freud loyalists.

The Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, Freud's disciple and later archrival, claimed Bernays had confessed to an affair to him. (The claim was dismissed by Freudians as malice on Jung's part.) Some researchers have even theorized that she may have become pregnant by Freud and had an abortion.

What was lacking was proof. But a German sociologist says he has found evidence that on Aug. 13, 1898, during a vacation in the Swiss Alps, Freud, then 42, and Bernays, 33, put up at the Schweizerhaus, an inn in Maloja, and registered as a married couple, a finding that may cause historians to reevaluate their understanding of Freud's own psychology.



FREUD

A yellowing page of the leather-bound ledger shows they occupied Room 11. Freud signed, in his distinctive Germanic scrawl, "Dr Sigm Freud u frau," abbreviated German for "Dr. Sigmund Freud and wife."

"By any reasonable standard of proof, Sigmund Freud and his wife's sister, Minna Bernays, had a liaison," wrote Franz Maciejewski, a sociologist formerly at the University of Heidelberg and a specialist in psychoanalysis, who tracked down the record in August.

The evidence is persuasive enough for Peter Gay, the Freud biographer and longtime skeptic on what he called "the Minna matter," to say he is now inclined to revise his work accordingly. *NYT*

Crime wave seen hitting UK

LONDON—BRITAIN is set to witness a rise in crime rates and a big jump in the prison population, according to a confidential Downing Street memo leaked to The Sunday Times newspaper.

The document, drawn up by Prime Minister Tony Blair's Strategy Unit, warned that a slowdown in economic growth was set to trigger a rise in crime rates for the first time in 12 years.

The report suggested the government should consider methods used abroad to combat crime, such as enforced heroin vaccinations, alcohol rationing, a ban on alcohol advertising, "chemical castration" for sex offenders, identity chip implants, the public shaming of offenders and the use of bounty hunters.

One chart in the document suggested that the prison population was expected to rise by 25 percent in the next five years from 80,000 to more than 100,000—far exceeding the prison places the government has planned for, suggesting that ministers will have to consider alternatives.

"Prison numbers are rising beyond capacity, yet evidence suggests that they are an expensive way to meet crime and punishment objectives," the report said. *AFP*

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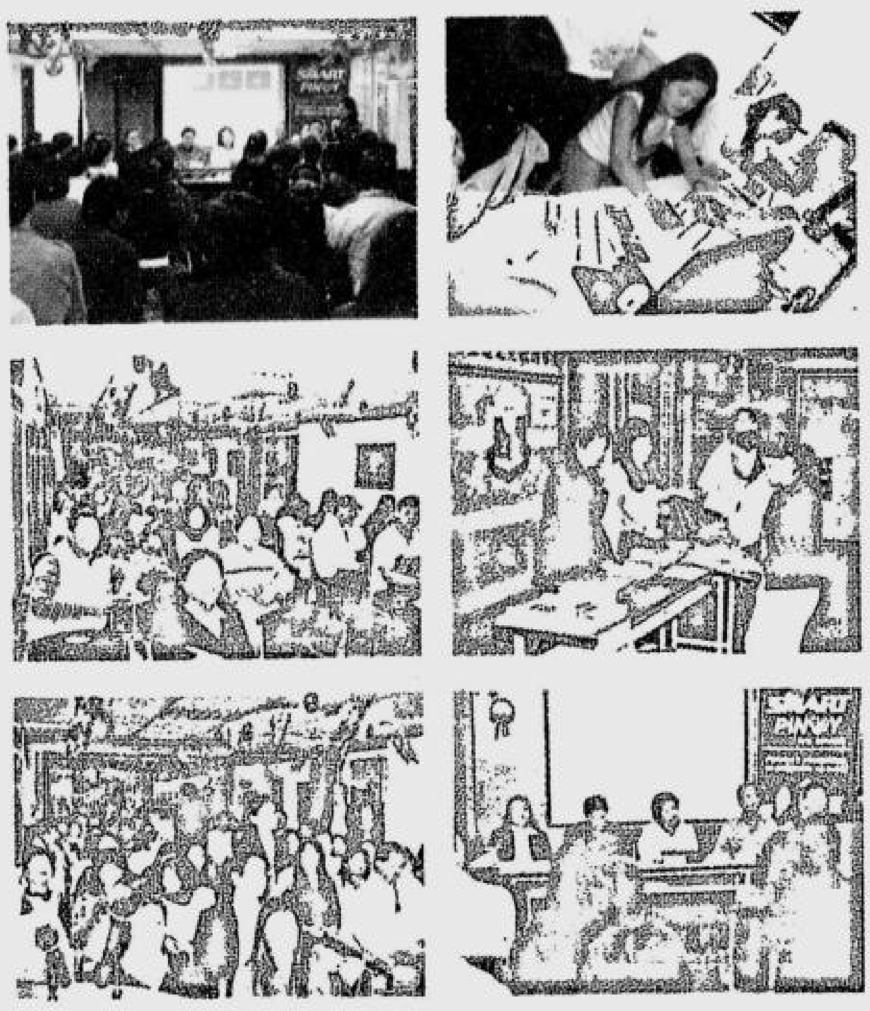
SMART PINOY

OWWA & MECO Lead the Way for OFWs in Taiwan

SMART Pinoy signals its growing reach to OFWs in Taiwan by partnering with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO).



Ensuring a Bright Future

The life of an OFW and his family may be replete with challenges but it is also full of promise. It is this promise of a brighter future that propelled SMART Communications, Inc. (SMART) to reach out to some 92,000 OFWs in Taiwan through its brand for overseas Filipino workers, Smart Pinoy.

Together with OWWA and MECO, SMART mounted a business forum dubbed "Kinabukasan, Kabuhayan, Tulong Namin" with the objective of giving OFWs the business and technical know-how to continue improving their lives after foreign employment.

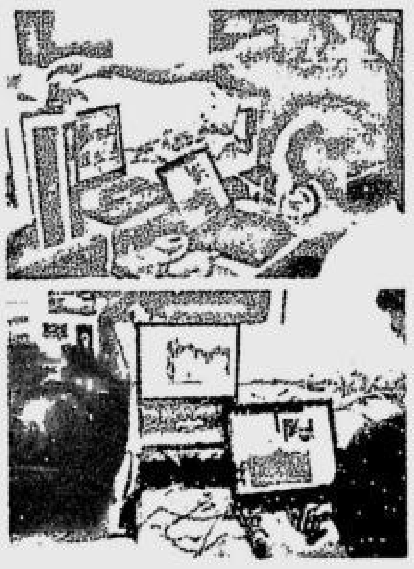
"The recently concluded Business Forum in Taiwan is only the beginning of MECO and OWWA's partnership in reaching out to OFWs on-site and preparing them for their eventual return to the Philippines," said OWWA Administrator Marianito D. Roque. MECO Managing Director and Resident Representative in Taiwan Antonio I. Basilio said that they intend to provide the migrant worker an opportunity to generate a sustainable livelihood for himself and his family. "We hope to lessen the risk by providing opportunities in proven business models such as those offered by Smart," he added. Basilio and Director Carl Velasquez of OWWA graced the event together with other officials. It was an initial step in the bigger reintegration program that is being mounted by OWWA, MECO and SMART Pinoy.

Partnering with the Experts

A formidable line-up of resource speakers was tapped to offer the OFWs four options on how to economically sustain themselves and their families while working abroad and after foreign employment. Among the topics discussed were:

1. Agri-business: "Investing in Agricultural Enterprises" by the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD)-DOST, with resource speaker Dr. Patricio S. Faylon, Executive Director of PCARRD-DOST.
2. Aqua-culture: "Aqua-culture Investment Opportunities in the Philippines" by the Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development (PCMARD)-DOST, with resource speaker Mr. Ronaldo B. Edra, Chief Science Research Specialist, Inland Aquatic Resources Division (IARD), PCMARD-DOST.
3. Franchising: "The Basics of Franchising" with resource speaker Mr. Armando "Butz" O. Bartolome, President of GMB Franchise Developer of the Philippines.
4. SMART Entrepreneurial Program (SEP) with resource speakers Ms. Luisa Lansingan, Senior Sales Manager of SMART Bro; Mr. Rec Babasa, Senior Manager for Financial Services & New Wave of Communications, talking for SMART Padala; and SMART Lead for the Taiwan Business Forum Project, Ms. Hazel T. Custodio, Senior Manager for New Business - Communities.

The SEP is a set of business opportunities offered to OFWs under the SMART Pinoy bundle. Under the SEP, OFWs can put up SMART Padala or SMART Bro centers as investment opportunities. Expectedly it was the most warmly-received option with almost 80% of those who attended indicating interest to engage in one or 2 SEP opportunities.



Seeing Face to Face

All the OFWs who flocked to the forum were thankful that they took the time to attend the event. But the most dramatic moment came when SMART Pinoy announced that free video conferencing would be offered to some lucky attendees. Unknown to them, their families in the Philippines had been contacted prior to the event and were just waiting for the video conference to start. It was a first time for most of the OFWs to "see" their families. Emotions ran high as expressions of love and concern were exchanged. "It was truly heartwarming to see their reaction upon seeing their family and relatives. These are the times that make all the hard work worthwhile ," said Custodio.

SMART Pinoy offers an umbrella of services relevant to the OFW and his family. Through services like IDD, International Text and MMS, International Video Call, International Voice Text and SMART Padala, the Filipino Family is closer, more connected and more secure. OFWs can expect more to come as SMART Pinoy extends its reach to more countries abroad.

Overseas Workers Welfare Administration

Manila Economic Cultural Office

SMART PINOY
OFW SERVICES
Pamilya'y pinagtitibay, sa pagganda ng buhay.

IDD TEXT MMS ROAMING VIDEO CALL

DAHIL SMART TAYO

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- **Philly shows** signs of life /A25

SPORTS

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- **Yao breaks** bone, out six weeks /A25

PBL's Latoreno plays Santa to young cagers

By Jasmine W. Payo

MEL LATORENO AUGUST DELA CRUZ

TELETECH FORWARD MEL LAtoreno didn't wait for Christmas to spread happiness to young, aspiring basketball players.

For the past months, the PBL veteran has been conducting informal basketball clinics with children in his hometown in Cainta, Rizal.

"I've been seeing kids who have potential in basketball, but they don't have the basic skills," Latoreno said in Filipino.

The 28-year-old cager may have been overshadowed by younger league superstars, but Latoreno's status as the neighborhood cage hero seemed enough to please his eager students.

"In our place, I'm the only one who has reached this far in basketball," he said. "The kids listen, they respect me a lot because they see me on TV."

So during his free time on weekends, Latoreno gathers a dozen children aged 7 to 12 years old for a few hours of lessons.

"It's encouraging every time they say they want to play like you," he said. "Sometimes they go to my PBL games because they just want to watch me live."

Although his young fans motivate him, Latoreno sincerely wants his students to hone their basketball skills.

"It's important to learn the basics," he said. "It's fun and it feels good every time you seem them improve."

The former collegiate standout from the University of Santo Tomas has even encouraged more people to spread the good deed.

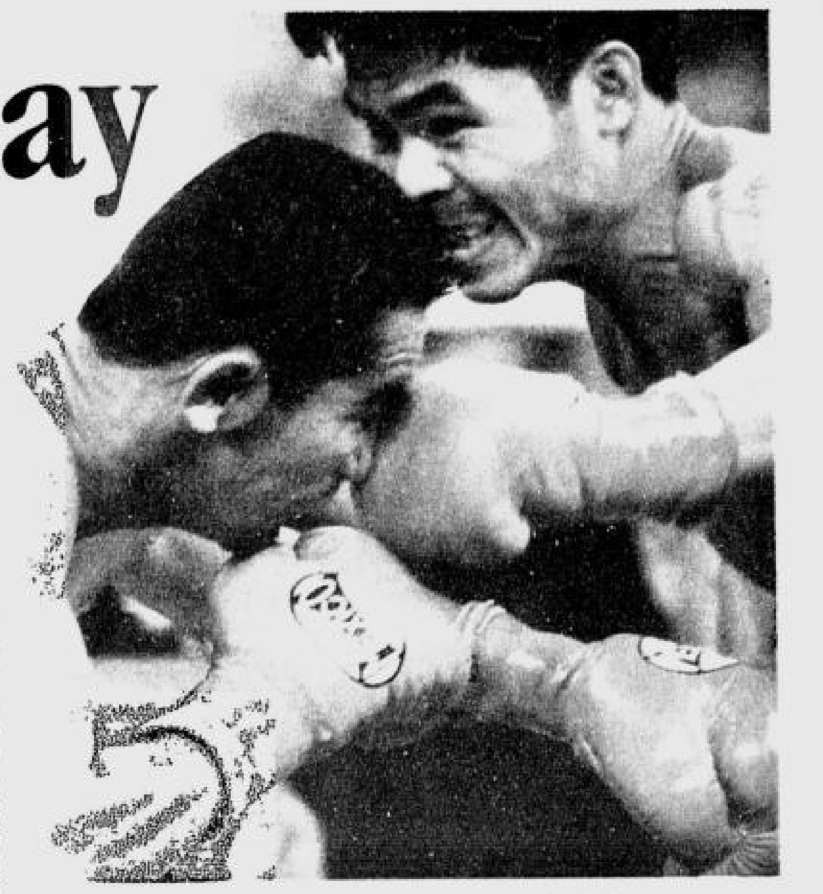
"Even if it's my idea, I want my friends to help me out so we can teach more kids," he said.

And Latoreno hopes more children will love the sport as much as he does.

"Basketball has helped me a lot," said Latoreno. "I've learned many things from different coaches and different teams. I just want to share it with them."

Pacquiao set to lose $5-M payday

Barrera-Marquez almost done deal



MANNY PACQUIAO: No marketable opponent in sight. AP

JUST DAYS AFTER he announced that he is now willing to fight WBC super-featherweight champion Marco Antonio Barrera, Filipino icon Manny Pacquiao is set to lose that multimillion dollar opportunity as a Barrera-Juan Manuel Marquez showdown is reportedly close to being consummated.

Golden Boy Promotions Chief Executive Officer Richard Shaefer, in an interview with Boxingscene, has informed that contrary to Pacquiao's claim that he will fight Barrera in April, a fight between Barrera and Marquez is already set on March 17 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

"It's not finalized yet but close," Schaefer was quoted as saying.

In an interview with this writer recently in Florida, Schaefer had hoped that Pacquiao would make up his mind and be man enough to honor his previous signed contract with GBP. Schaefer pointed out the example set by Filipino Jimrex Jaca, who flew to the US to honor an earlier commitment to fight Marquez, in the process making for himself more money and allowing his own stock to rise dramatically with an impressive showing.

However, as things are shaping up, it seems a potential Pacquiao-Barrera rematch will not happen anytime soon, or even not at all.

"My hope is that Manny comes to realize who his true friends are and would use past experience as a measuring stick of friendship," said Schaefer. "Who helped him out in his last mess and who has helped him to become the fighter he is today?"

Schaefer also explained that it would not be fair for Barrera and Marquez to "simply sit around and wait" as Pacquiao tries to make a decision on his next career move.

A Barrera-Marquez showdown will surely put back Pacquiao's career, as there seems to be no other marketable foe available for Pacquiao on the horizon.

A potential duel with WBA champ Edwin Valero was doused this week when Akihiko Honda, who promotes Valero, stated that his ward is not yet ready for Pacquiao in 2007. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

Reyes skeptical of unity forged by MVP, Jinggoy

By June Navarro

CHOT REYES

DON'T BLAME CHOT REYES IF HE DOUBTS the certainty of the agreement reached by the country's basketball leaders.

The head coach of the national basketball team is treating the understanding between telecommunications magnate Manny V. Pangilinan and Sen. Jinggoy Estrada with a paranoid attitude after similar unification talks got shelved in the past.

"Of course, I'm happy," Reyes told the INQUIRER. "But it remains to be seen if the BAP will abide by the agreement."

Estrada, president of the Basketball Association of the Philippines, forged a gentleman's agreement with Pangilinan Friday night in Hong Kong, opening the door for the Philippines to regain its membership in the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) and see action in international tournaments.

Both parties agreed to install Pangilinan as president of the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas, the organization formed after the BAP and Pilipinas Basketball signed a communique in Tokyo to iron out the lifting of the Fiba suspension on the country.

Estrada will be the chair of the fledgling organization while appointing PBA chair Ricky Vargas as vice chair, PLDT Global's Al Panlilio as executive director and Air21 president Lito Alvarez as treasurer.

"Right now, there's nothing sure about it (Pangilinan-Estrada agreement)," said Reyes, who cited a past incident that snagged the unification talks between the BAP and the PB.

He was referring to the three-man panel, composed of former BAP president Joey Lina, PB president Bernie Atienza and Pangilinan, which was on the verge of striking a deal to end the crisis but later had a falling out after it couldn't agree on the lineup of SBP officials.

The talks were further delayed when Lina stepped down as BAP head and was replaced by Estrada almost two months back.

"They were moving toward accomplishing the accord in Tokyo then suddenly the talks were called off," said Reyes.

For now, Reyes pointed out that he would concentrate on his San Miguel Beer coaching chores in the Philippine Basketball Association before taking any concrete action for the national team.

"Whether the programs of the national team will push through depends on the lifting of the Fiba suspension," said Reyes.

"Let's just wait for the suspension to be lifted because that's the only time we could really work for the national team."

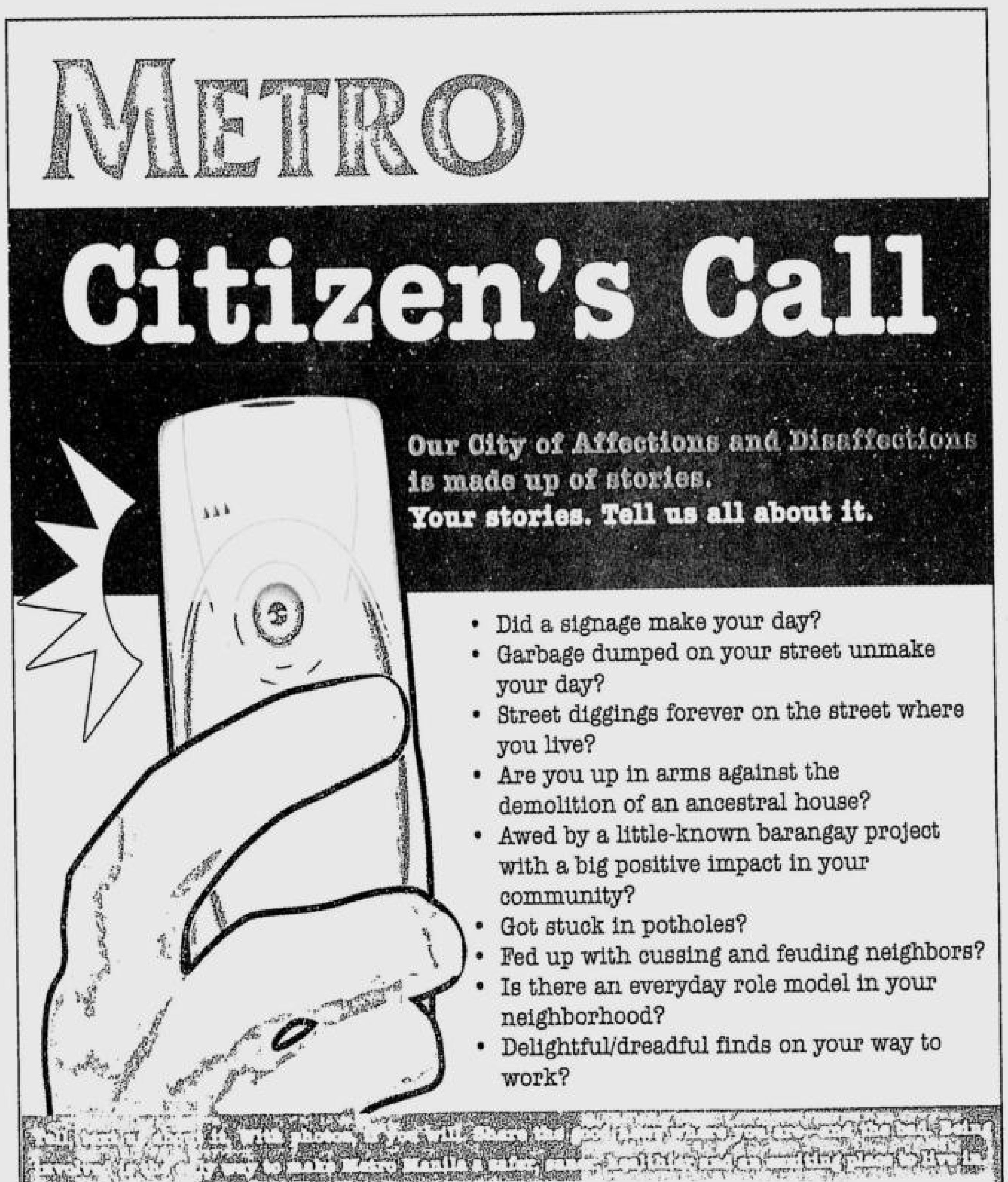
Reyes was named head coach of the PBA-backed national team in January 2005.

The national squad composed of PBA stars, however, failed to compete in Fiba-sanctioned tournaments after the world governing body on the sport suspended the Philippines last year.

Reyes and the Nationals played in the Jones Cup in Taipei twice, participated in a tune-up tournament in Qatar some months back and successfully defended the crown in the Brunei Sultan's Cup last September.

In between international exposures, the national dribblers played a series of goodwill games in the country against teams from Australia, China, Chinese Taipei and Lebanon to keep them at pace with international action.

Since their Sultan's Cup title victory, the national team was temporarily disbanded pending the lifting of the Fiba suspension and the SBP's recognition from the Philippine Olympic Committee.


METRO

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- Awed by a little-known barangay project with a big positive impact in your community?
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- Is there an everyday role model in your neighborhood?
- Delightful/dreadful finds on your way to work?

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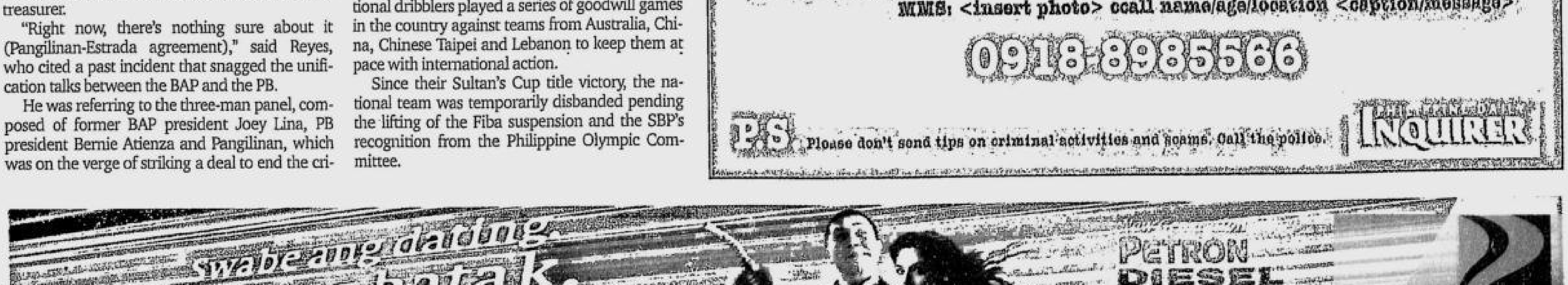

swabe ang dating.
Lakas ng hatak.
Max. Diesel Max.
PETRON DIESEL MAX
Above all diesels.
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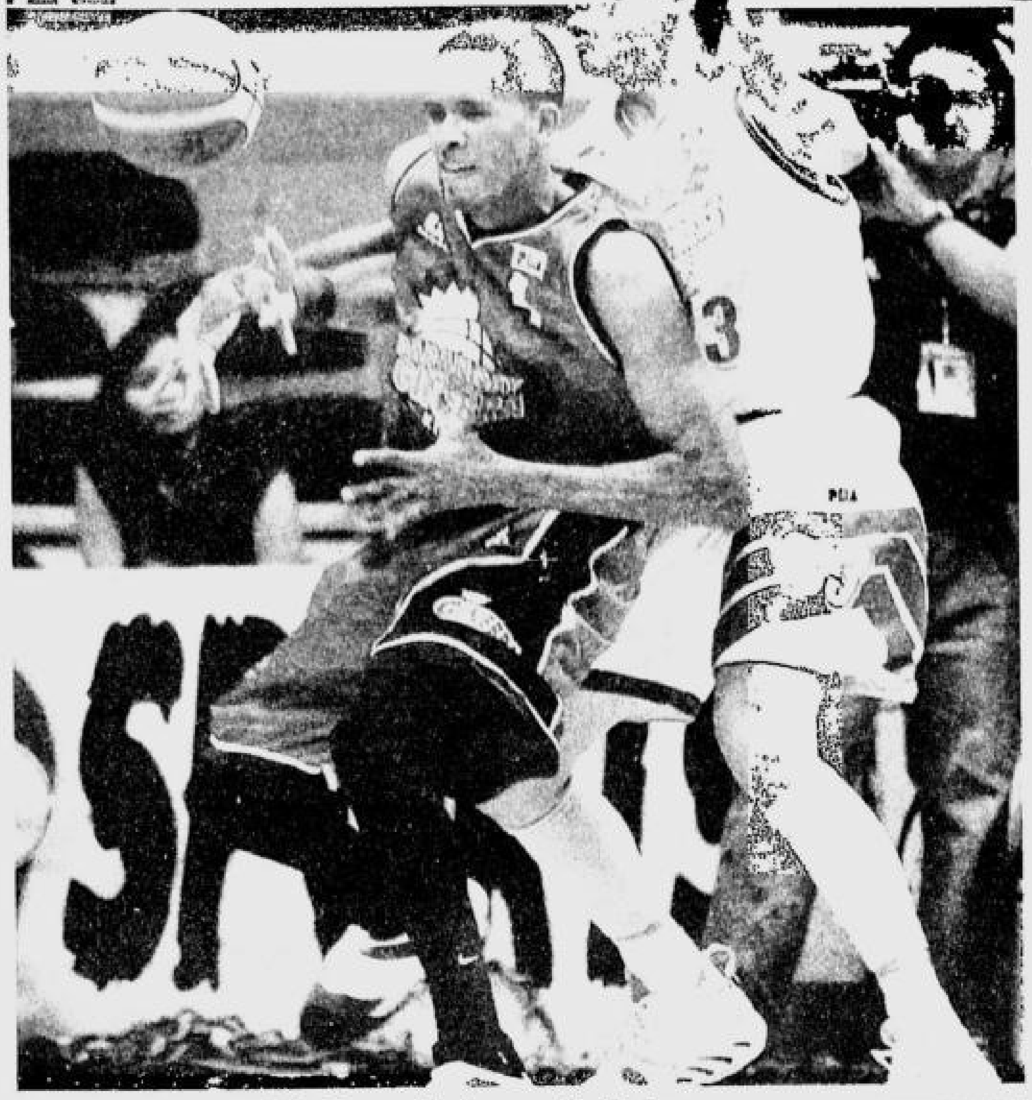
Air21 battles SMB; Ginebra faces TNT



RANIDEL de Ocampo (right) is one of the key men for the Express. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

By Musong R. Castillo

THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS TO do on Christmas—the least of them is worry.

Purefoods and Sta. Lucia, though, don't have the luxury of avoiding a few creased foreheads.

After suffering losing streaks in separate, critical parts of the Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup, the Chunkee Giants and the Realtors will be spending this part of the holidays sitting on pins and needles, their fates for the playoffs in the hands of another team.

Barangay Ginebra is a side that has no pressure at all—its place as the No. 1 team in the playoffs firmly secured—but curiously, the Gin Kings hold the key to whether or not the defending champion Giants and the Realtors get free quarterfinal rides.

The Kings clash with Talk 'N Text in a match that has so much bearing for Purefoods, Sta. Lucia and the Phone Pals that it is fitting that it is played in the final day of elimination today at the Araneta Coliseum.

A victory by the Kings in the 5 p.m. game would complete the quarterfinal cast, easing the Phone Pals out of the picture and into the wildcard phase.

Talk 'N Text winning, on the other hand, would give the Phone Pals the second quarterfinal seat because of a superior quotient against Sta. Lucia and the Giants, who will then clash for the third and last seat available automatically.

As things stand, the Kings and San Miguel, which collide with Air21 in the first game at 2:30 p.m., have secured the first two slots in the Final Four, with Red Bull, as the No. 3 team in the eliminations, already bagging the first quarterfinal berth.

At 10-8, Sta. Lucia and Purefoods only earned playoffs for the last berth. Should Talk 'N Text win against the Kings, the Phone Pals, who will also end up with a 10-8 slate, would march on.

A playoff would be played Jan. 3 with the winner joining Red Bull and Talk 'N Text. The loser, on the other hand, will slug it out with Alaska, the Express and Coca-Cola in a single round wildcard phase to determine the final team that would make the quarterfinals.

Ginebra will come into the game the winner of its last seven games, while San Miguel will take on the Express also without the pressure of winning but with a six-game victory streak on the line.

Mark Caguioa, Rudy Hatfield, Eric Menk and Jay-Jay Helterbrand will be the focal points of the Ginebra offense, while Asi Taulava and Jimmy Alapag, together with gunslinger Ren-Ren Ritualo, are the men to watch at Talk 'N Text.

This game will also be of particular importance to the Express, who, at 7-10, could definitely use a victory that would move them within striking distance of the top team in the wildcard. *Musong R. Castillo*

Capacio to coach Tamaraws

By Jasmine W. Payo

LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER FORMER pro will be calling the shots in the UAAP.

Glenn Capacio, who suited up as a Purefoods guard in the PBA, had been manning the sidelines of the Far Eastern University Tamaraws in post-season developmental leagues.

Capacio took over Bert Flores, who will be serving as team consultant starting next UAAP season.

"We're taking it one league at a time," said FEU board representative Anton Montinola. "Whatever happens, coach Bert will be consultant."

But Capacio already boosted his stocks by having an auspicious debut with the Tamaraws.

The 42-year-old mentor recently guided the Tamaraws to a first-place finish in the Fr. Martin's Cup and to a third-place run in the FilOil-Flying V Homegrown Invitational Cup.

Capacio will again be joining the Tamaraws in the Home and Away Invitational League and the Nike Summer League next year.

"I feel more relaxed as a consultant," said Flores, who arrived recently from a collegiate basketball camp in Maui, Hawaii.

Flores steered the Tamaraws to the 2005 UAAP championship on his rookie year, while Capacio served as one of his assistants.

But their title-defense campaign proved tougher than expected.

Reeling from the departure of their veterans, the Tamaraws settled for fifth place with a 5-7 win-loss record this UAAP season and became the first defending champion to miss the semifinals since the league implemented the Final Four format in 1994.

Other former PBA stars who have crossed over the sidelines include Pido Jarencio of reigning UAAP champion UST, Norman Black of Ateneo, Franz Pumaren of De La Salle and Dindo Pumaren of UE.

Samonte, Astilla snare title in Eagle Ridge Invitational

GEORGE SAMONTE SR. AND his guest partner Florante Astilla overcame a 17-point deficit in the first round with a big explosion the next day en route to winning the Class A title in the recent 2006 Eagle Ridge Invitational in Gen. Trias, Cavite.

Hardly expecting anything after falling so far behind the first round of action at the Faldo course, Samonte and Astilla made 41 and 48 points, respectively, for 89 points at the Norman course that got them to first place at 156. They beat Hwan Kang-Jae/Jung Hong-Soo (85-154) and Hyung Jun-Kim/Choon Sik-Yoo (153).

Romeo Odi and Rey Condencido topped Group B while Alberto Rostrata and Grace Superal clinched Class C.

Odi/Condencido amassed 160 (75 at Faldo and 85 at Aoki) to beat Nemesio Pagtakhan and Benny Ray Hurtado with Edgardo Ho/Allan Yap claiming third spot at 153.

Rostrata/Superal streaked to a big lead with an 84 at Norman and added an 82 at Aoki for 166 and a 10-point win over Francisco Olalia/Angelito Ayson and Serge Fojas/Erick Virata.

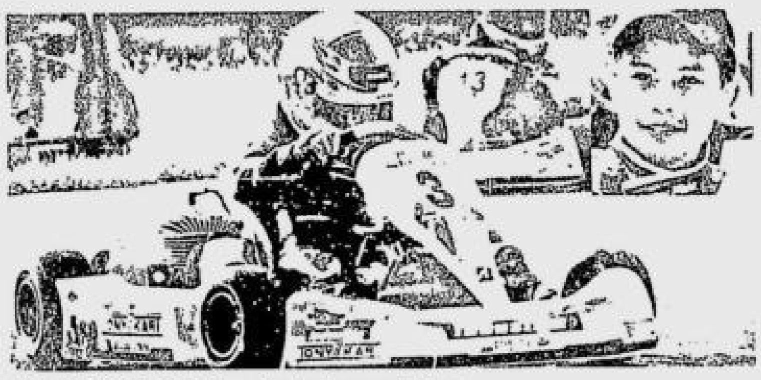
Antonio Villaruel and Bienvenido Cerbo won the special division among sponsoring companies that included Petron, PacSports, WG Golf Construction Corp., G-Shop, GG&A Club Development Inc., Philippine Airlines, HSBC, INQUIRER Golf, Bacardi, Electrobus Consolidated/Callaway, Unilever, GMA Channel 7 and Tanduay.

Although nobody won the Toyota Avanza staked as a hole-in-on prize for two days, most of the 400 participants went home with a prize and happy memories of a very successful member-guest tournament capped by a fun-filled awards ceremony and fireworks display.

The Invitational also ended another tournament season at the country's biggest golf complex which hosted some of the country's biggest tournaments for 2006.

Engineer Winnie Gob, project director of Eagle Ridge, said a lot of corporate and member tournaments are being lined up for next year.

Reyes tops Asian kartfest



FRANCO REYES: Toughest at crunch time.

FRANCO REYES OF JET RACING Team Philippines fashioned out a down-the-wire victory over Sasakorn Chaimongol of Thailand in the Cadet 60 division of the recent Macau International Kart Grand Prix at the Kartodromo de Coloane, Macau, China.

The 10-year-old Grade 4 Ateneo student's perseverance in practice and his stint in the ROK World Finals in Italy last October paid off as he topped all the qualifying heats, the pre-final and the finals of the Cadet 60 races.

The thrilling finale saw Reyes lead most of the way until Chaimongkol catch up with him with three laps to go in the 12-lap finals. Juan Antonio Carcel of Cebu Racing Group joined them going into the last lap, making it a three-way fight.

Reyes regained the lead in the last lap with a lunge on the inside line of the first corner. Running in consecutive races in the Cadet 60 and MiniRok divisions took its toll on Reyes who made a mistake on the hairpin curve of the 1.2-kilometer track.

This enabled the Thai to take the lead with less than a lap to go.

Determined to win the title, the strong-willed boy from Antipolo closed in on the Thai in the penultimate corner. They went up the inclined section of the track together and Reyes slipped past Sasakorn on his way to the finish line as they exited the last corner.

It was a photo finish with Reyes besting the Thai by only .043 of a second for the win and the overall title in the Cadet 60 division in the 2006 Asian Karting Open Championship Series.

Reyes, who is is supported by Industria Productions, Bingo Bonanza, Pacific Online Systems, and ShoeMart, went on to race in the MiniRok finals, finishing seventh and emerging second runner-up in the overall championship in the MiniRok division (10-12 years old).

"Last year, I went home from Macau crying and without a trophy, because my engine failed in the final race," said Reyes, who dedicated his victory to his brother Diego, his school and the Philippines. "Now, I have three trophies from Macau!"

"Franco's experience in the world finals immensely improved his race craft," said his coach Elson Carpio of Jet Racing.

'Lechon' not as sweet as Asiad gold

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO all.

And kindly make it truly merry for your family, and for those who truly care for you, by keeping healthy despite the perils that lurk over the holiday table.

To jump-start this busy, exciting day, here's a timely holiday reminder from my private Santa, Richard Merk, jazz's gift to the music world: "Good morning! Thank You, GOD, for another day. Short lang message ko for today: Hinay-hinay lang sa lechon, ha! Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon sa iyo Kaibigan."

That's not a mere reminder, of course.

That's a loving warning from a loving friend.

***

Mr. Merk was direct to the point.

Pork could be both sweet and deadly.

For proof: we attended last night the wake for an old friend in the barrio next to our village in riverside Mandaluyong.

Cesar Flores, a big-hearted cousin of four-time Olympian Narciso Bernardo, had looked in perfect health.

He was, as usual, his outgoing, helpful self.

Then he dropped his guard.

Teta decided to slug it out with a tray full of lechon during a Christmas party at the Namayan Park.

His BP sizzled and soared, he got KO'd for good.

***

What a loss.

The jolly good fellow, a great fan of the game of basketball, was always there to lend a hand to whoever needed help.

Yes, there will never be another one like him.

Knowing Teta, it's not farfetched to surmise he had decided to do duel with *lechon* to properly warn friends about their dumb diet.

At least, those who have heard about Teta's fate now think twice before running to the market for a kilo or two of pork.

They have suddenly agreed that pork could be as fatal as poison if improperly handled.

These people have also started considering healthier dinner alternatives.

***

The perils of pork, in case you've decided to look the other way, lurk in myriad other dishes like menudo, mechado, cucido, embotido, adodo, igado, to name only a few.

Now, lest the pork dealers of the Philippine started lobbying against this column, let me assure them that pork dishes are always worth a try.

But, to repeat, the perfect password for the season should be: RESTRAINT.

Why? Because, at this part of the party, you are bound to, again, get carried away.

Your appetite, take heed, could send you soaring past the happy holiday streets, en route to clogged arteries, all the way into the dark, joyless dead-end.

So, JOY being the message of this day, the call is: Don't get carried away.

Yes, one good round of *lechon* doesn't deserve another.

Unlike with the Asian Games gold medals brought home by our athletes, more *lechon* is not merrier.

For one, *lechon* or ham, unlike RP's Asiad golds, can never be used as cure-all by overjoyed gourmets in the national sports hierarchy.

So, Paragua join Singapore tilt

NEWLY CROWNED NATIONAL CHAMPion Wesley So and Grandmaster Mark Paragua are leaving today to compete in the 2006 Singapore Masters and Challengers International Open Chess Tournaments starting tomorrow. The 13-year-old So, who topped the 2nd Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr. National Championships at the SM Mall in Manila on Saturday, is seeking his second GM result. So's stint in the Singapore Masters is being backed by Filway Marketings Inc. CEO/ president Hector "Chito" Tagaysay and businessman Reginald Tee under the auspices of National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Rep. Pichay and secretary general Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino Jr. The Bacoor, Cavite-based So obtained his first GM result in Badweisee, Germany, last month. Paragua, on the other hand, is being supported by the Department of Tourism (DOT) headed by secretary Ace Durano and assistant secretary Cynthia Carrion. The 22-year-old Paragua finished fourth with 6.5 points in the Pichay Cup. *NM Marlon Bernardino*

Rookie pair hands Southwoods title

RICHIE Coronel, Marty Ilagan and Tonyt Fernando with their trophy.

THE ROOKIE TANDEM OF RICHIE CORONEL Santos and Tonyt Fernando pivoted the Southwoods team to victory in the Federation Golf League recently.

Santos holed two long putts that keyed Southwood's triumph.

A 30-footer birdie on the 18th hole won for him and Fernando the alternate match over the duo of Wolen Superal and Sherwin Ferrer on the first day.

The following day, he unleashed another 30-foot birdie on the last hole at the Orchard that salvaged a draw against the pair of Raymond Singil and Nonoy Chuatico in the scramble format.

Fernando, mentored by Bong Lopez, is a member of Team Philippines that competed in Australia, China, Hong Kong and Turkey.

Santos, on the other hand, was a former Jet Ski Rider of the Year who learned how to play golf from the famous Butch Harmon in Las Vegas and is currently being coached by former world champion Carito Villaroman.

Former club champion Marty Ilagan is the captain of the victorious Southwoods team.

Shago Racing gears up for bigger year

SHAGO RACING, A BRAINCHILD OF FIVE-time slalom champion Danny Santiago, will have a busier schedule next year after joining forces with Integrated Marketing and Promo Activation Inc (Impact).

"Our partnership with Impact empowered our organization with full resources," Santiago said.

Santiago and his wife Marinel labored to revive the spirit of car racing among Filipino drivers, bringing the sport to the most accessible place in Macapagal Boulevard and posting affordable entry fees.

They're enjoying relative success so far.

"We're very happy with the turnout of participants in our first two seasons. To date, we have the biggest number of following."

Shago Racing is expected to gain more following next year.

After having a combined 10 legs in its first two seasons, the event will have eight tarmac legs and two dirt autocross on its third season.

The dirt autocross was last staged in the country three years ago with Alex Perez claiming the title.

Also on tap next year are two grand car outdoor exhibits at the Aseana Business Park.

There will also be the National Autocross where the Manila champions will battle the champions from Davao.

THE WINNERS of the Davao Autocross (inset) will race with the champions from Manila in the National Autocross next year.

Knight equals NCAA coaching record

LUBBOCK, TEXAS—BOB KNIGHT matched Dean Smith for the most coaching victories in US college basketball history with his 879th triumph when his Texas Tech Red Raiders defeated Bucknell, 72-60, here Saturday.

The controversial 66-year-old coach, in his 41st season, improved to 879-353. Knight began his career at the US Military Academy and made his fame at Indiana, guiding the Hoosiers to US titles in 1976, 1981 and 1987.

Knight, who also coached the 1984 US Olympic team to gold at Los Angeles, will have his first chance to take sole possession of the mark here on Thursday when the Red Raiders, 10-3, host Nevada-Las Vegas.

"Any time the coaching is given an award for anything, the great thing about the award is it recognizes everybody. That's certainly the case in our situation," Knight said.

Knight, whose 1976 Indiana squad is the last team to complete an unbeaten title run, thanked former players and assistant coaches from throughout his four decades guiding students.

"There are a lot more people than myself who can enjoy this," Knight said. "They know they have had at least as much to do with it as I have."

Smith, who spent his entire 36-year coaching career at North Carolina, set the record in 1997.

"He epitomized in his coaching what team play is all about," Knight said of Smith. "That's what I have tried to do also."

Knight won 662 of 901 games at Indiana but much of the controversy in his career came in the same span, including an arrest for assaulting a Puerto Rican policeman at the 1979 Pan American Games. Charges were later dropped.

Knight hurled a chair across the court before a free throw during a game against archrival Purdue in 1985 and appeared to choke Neil Reed, one of his own players, during a 1997 practice.

Knight was fired in September of 2000 and took over at Texas Tech the following year.

There is, however, no disputing Knight's remarkable record on the court.

Knight has coached in 27 NCAA tournaments, another record he shares with Smith, and in 1976 guided Indiana to a perfect season of 32-0 and a national title. No men's team have gone unbeaten since.

He also left his mark on the international game, leading the United States to the basketball gold medal at the 1984 Olympics. *AFP*

BOB KNIGHT instructs guard Alan Voskuil. AP

Yao breaks bone, out six weeks

HOUSTON—YAO MING WILL MISS AT LEAST six weeks after fracturing the bone under his right knee during the Houston Rockets' 98-93 loss to the Los Angeles Clippers in the NBA on Saturday.

Yao was leaping for a blocked shot as Chuck Hayes and Tim Thomas hit the floor beneath him in the first quarter. Yao's knee appeared to get caught under Thomas' body and Yao immediately grabbed his knee and screamed in pain.

YAO AP

Yao was taken to Memorial Hermann Hospital in Houston, where an MRI test revealed a fracture of the Chinese star's right tibial plateau, trainer Keith Jones said.

Jones said he hopes the injury will not require surgery.

"It's a non-displaced fracture, so nothing is way out of the way or out of whack," Jones said. "We think he'll do well with just rest. An option would be to do something more, but we're hoping that won't need to be done."

The injury ruins the best start of Yao's NBA career. He was averaging 27 points and nine rebounds—both career bests—and had topped 30 points in four consecutive games before scoring 22 in Friday's 97-78 victory at San Antonio.

The Rockets were already playing without six-time All-Star Tracy McGrady, who sat out for the seventh straight game with back spasms.

Yao faces rehabilitation for the third time in a year. Last December, he underwent surgery for a toe infection and missed 21 games. Last April, he broke his left foot in Utah and missed the final four games of the season. *AP*

San Mig srs finishes at Wack Wack

THE SIXTH AND FINAL LEG OF THE 2006 San Mig Coffee Sugar Free Senior Golf Series will be held Dec. 29 at the west course of the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club. Tee-off is shotgun style at 7 a.m.

Hosted by the Capitol Hills Senior Golfers, Inc. and organized by the Federation of Philippine Amateur Senior Golfers, Inc., about 120 players are expected to play in the 18-hole tourney.

There will be five individual age categories to be disputed as well as the team gross and net divisions using the five-to-play, four-to-count format and the Blind Callaway system of scoring.

Group A is for 55-59 years, B for 60-64, C for 65-69, D for 70-74 and E for 75 and above. There will be trophies for the top finishes in each age bracket while participants can win prizes in the raffle.

Tournament fee is P2,000. For inquiries, call the secretariat at 4213859 or 4213861.

Alcano blows Taiwan bid

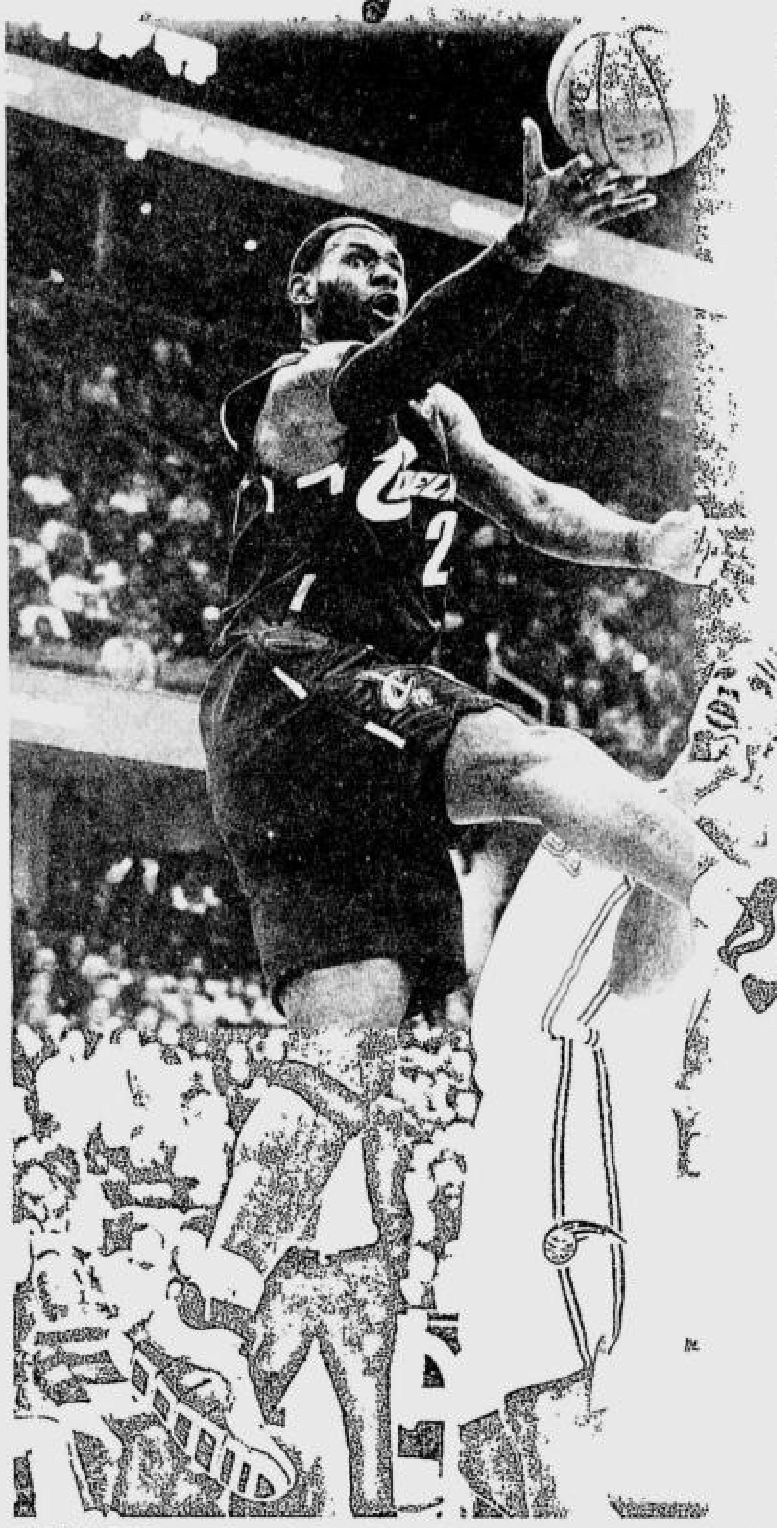
FILIPINO RONATO "VOLCANO" ALCANO, the reigning world champion, yielded to defending titlist and two-time Asian games winner Yang Ching Shun of Taiwan, 7-6, in the quarterfinals of the 2006 Power-In Super Cup at the Living Mall in Taipei, Taiwan.

Tied at 6-all, the 34-year-old Alcano from Calamba City, Laguna scratched in his break in the final rack, allowing the 27-year-old Kaoshiung pool wizard to seal the victory.

"It was a sorry game but that happens," said Billiards and Snooker Conmgress of the Philippines president Ernie Fajardo yesterday. "It's called breaks of the game."

The RP hopes were further crushed when Jose "Amang" Parica lost to Taiwanese Wu Chia Ching, 7-4. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

Philly shows signs of life


CLEVELAND star player LeBron James lofts an attempt past Orlando forward Trevor Ariza. REUTERS

PHILADELPHIA—ANDRE IGUODALA SCORED 20 POINTS AND Andre Miller added nine points and 11 assists in his Philadelphia debut, leading the 76ers over the New York Knicks 98-77 in the NBA on Saturday.

Iguodala's performance came one night after he scored a career-high 31 points in a victory at Boston, ending the Sixers' 12-game losing streak.

Chris Webber had 18 points, Kyle Korver contributed 16, and Samuel Dalembert had 11 for the Sixers (7-19), who open a seven-game trip on Tuesday at Golden State.

Miller, fourth in the league with 9.1 assists per game, and Joe Smith each played their first game for the Sixers since being acquired for Allen Iverson.

Cavaliers 86, Magic 83

At Cleveland, LeBron James scored 19 points in the fourth quarter and finished with 32, pushing him over 7,000 in his NBA career and carrying Cleveland to the win.

James, who will turn 22 next week, helped the Cavaliers snap a three-game losing streak.

Orlando took a 73-72 lead with 4:32 left on a basket by Trevor Ariza when James outscored the Magic 19-18 in the fourth.

T'wolves 78, Pacers 71

At Indianapolis, Kevin Garnett had 29 points and a season-high 19 rebounds, and Minnesota snapped a four-game slide.

Jamaal Tinsley scored 22 points and Jermaine O'Neal added 11 points, 11 rebounds and five blocks for Indiana despite battling the flu.

Heat 105, Warriors 92

At Miami, Jason Kapono came off the bench to score a career-high 27 points and Dwyane Wade added 18 points and eight assists for Miami.

Alonzo Mourning had 14 points and Udonis Haslem added 13 points and 10 rebounds for the defending NBA champion Heat.

Pistons 108, Hawks 81

At Auburn Hills, Michigan, Nazr Mohammed had 19 points and 10 rebounds to help Detroit get the win.

Atlanta was missing five players due to injury, including four of its six leading scorers. The Hawks only dressed 10 players, two short of the maximum.

Spurs 112, Hornets 77

At Oklahoma City, Tony Parker scored 19 points and San Antonio bounced back from its worst loss of the season.

Manu Ginobili added 17 points and four other players scored in double figures as the Spurs shot a season-high 62.9 percent from the field.

On Friday, the Spurs lost 97-78 to Houston.

Jazz 100, Grizzlies 97

At Memphis, Tennessee, Mehmet Okur scored 20 points, including a go-ahead 3-pointer with 36 seconds left, and Utah beat Memphis.

It was the only 3-pointer of the game for Okur, who entered shooting 63 percent from behind the arc over the last five games. Okur added a pair of free throws with 2.5 seconds to secure the victory.

Bulls 115, Bobcats 76

At Chicago, Ben Gordon scored 18 of his 23 points in the second quarter, and Chicago picked up its 13th victory in 15 games.

Chicago went on a 20-2 run midway through the first half to grab a 39-21 lead.

Gordon was 8-of-9 and converted both of his 3-point attempts.

Bucks 115, Nets 104

At Milwaukee, Mo Williams scored 32 points and Milwaukee beat New Jersey for their season-high fourth straight victory.

Milwaukee shot 55 percent from the floor (43-of-78) and got 21 points from Michael Redd.

Clippers 98, Rockets 93

At Houston, Yao Ming broke the bone under his right knee, and Los Angeles Clippers took advantage to snap a six-game losing streak.

Yao was taken to Memorial Hermann Hospital, where an MRI test revealed a fracture of his right tibial plateau, trainer Keith Jones said. The All-Star center is expected to miss at least six weeks. *AP*

AI likes what he sees in new 'home'

DENVER—THE JERSEY HUNG WIDE and crisp in the wooden locker, as if on display at a museum.

Dangling above the unopened bottles of shampoo and lotion—above the gift-wrapped present with the gold bow and the white sneakers with the initials "A.I." splashed across the straps—the back of the jersey was gleaming white.

The name and number sewn on the jersey was: "Iverson 3."

Allen Iverson's friend saw it hanging from the locker in the far corner of the room Friday night, the man paused, stepped back, then commented: "Oooh, this looks good."

With a broad smile across his face, the 31-year-old, 6-foot, seven-time all-star went to inspect.

"Yeah, it does," Iverson said, setting his bag on the floor. "That's nice."

It was more than an hour before tipoff inside Denver's Pepsi Center, and the locker room was perhaps the quietest place in the building. Two-dozen or so reporters, photographers and television cameramen stood outside, waiting to talk to the newest Nugget.

"How does it feel to be in Denver?"

"Are you happy?"

"What are the team's chances now that you're here?"

DerMarr Johnson and Eduardo Najera, the only two Nuggets' players in the locker room, slapped hands with their newest teammate and sat in their lockers. Iverson thanked Johnson, the team's former No. 3, for giving up the number.

Iverson took off his coat, and went to a back room for the physical examination that would finalize his trade from the Philadelphia 76ers.

Najera waited until Iverson left the room.

"Hey," the forward jokingly whispered to Johnson, now No. 8. "You better get some money out of it."

The two laughed.

Ira Klitzner stepped courtside, scanned the arena and screamed like a little girl.

"Oh my God, it's Allen Iverson! It's him! It's him!"

The 52-year-old portfolio manager pulled out his camera phone and shot a few photos.

"It's Allen Iverson! I can't believe this."

Mark Carleton, who sat courtside, leaned toward Iverson from his chair: "There is air to breathe up here."

"I hope so," Iverson said, flashing a smile.

While the aftermath of the blizzard that hit Colorado still lingered outside—keeping a few thousand people from the game, making Iverson a late arrival to the arena and preventing the arrival of Iverson merchandise to the arena—it did little to dampen the mood.

The crowd was deafening, from the first time Iverson stepped out of the tunnel for pregame ceremonies; to the first time he stepped on the court with 8:52 left in the first quarter against the Sacramento Kings; and even after the final seconds ticked off the clock.

They cheered when he high-fived fans surrounding the court. They cheered when he stood for "The Star Spangled Banner," when he made his first basket and when he rolled off eight straight points to lead the Nuggets on a third-quarter comeback.

"There's no way that I miss this game," said Dan Lucero, a 20-year-old college student, as he sat in nosebleed seats six rows from the arena's top. "I'm keeping this ticket forever."

He spoke to the media about his excitement coming to Denver: "I never had butterflies like that," he said.

And went back to his locker: "Man, I was running around out there like a chicken with my head cut off."

As the room cleared, Iverson took off the white jersey and splayed it in front of his locker like a rug. He showered and dressed, then talked to a handful of Nuggets' officials.

"We have practice at 10, right?" Iverson said. "Good." *NYT News Service*

Filipinos are starting to get hooked on rugby

RUGBY IS STARTING TO GAIN A LITTLE following in the Philippines.

Despite being an obscure sport hereabouts, the Philippine Rugby Football Union hopes to make terms such as tackles, scrums, rucks, mauls, tries and lineouts bywords in the country's sports lingo.

While many Filipinos find rugby union football a bit hard to understand, the game is growing here every year with now hundreds of players taking part in touch and contact versions at schools and private clubs.

With a mix of locals, long-term expatriates and Filipino players raised in Australia and the US, coach Matt Cullen predicts that the country can do well against other teams from other countries in Asia.

Recently, the team joined the Asian Rugby Football Union's annual regional Under 19 event in Kaohsiung and competed with teams from twenty countries around Asia, providing promising results.

The squad's players come from such varied schools as International School Manila, Brent International School, Faith Academy, Maritime Academy of Asia Pacific, and first year university students from Australia and the US.

In addition to these teams there are active rugby clubs at Philippine Air Force in Clark and a training squad at the PNP Academy in Cavite.

Those interested in joining or starting a rugby club can call 811-3173 or check the website at www.prfu.com

SPORTS

Sorolla bows to champ

JAKARTA—INTERNATIONAL BOXING Federation minimum weight champion Muhammad Rachman celebrated his 35th birthday with a big bang, halting Filipino challenger Benjie Sorolla in the seventh round of a scheduled 12-rounder at the Indoor Tennis Stadium Senayan here Saturday night.

Rachman peppered Sorolla with unanswered punches in the seventh round, prompting referee John Wright to stop the fight for a technical knockout victory by Rachman at the 2:10 mark.

Rachman was leading on all three judges' scorecards prior to the stoppage.

There were no knockdowns in the fight.

The Indonesian controlled the tempo of the fight right at the get-go, using his left jab to keep Sorolla at bay.

By the second, Sorolla started strong early, going to the midsection. Rachman, however, rocked Sorolla midway, although the Filipino closed out the round with a series of body shots.

Through rounds three to five, Rachman relied on his superior lateral skills and kept jabbing at Sorolla, who sustained a cut over his left eye in the sixth.

Rachman improved his record to 61-5-5, 31 KOs, while Sorolla went down to 21-11-3, 6 KOs.

Salven L. Lagumbay

Defiant beats odds, rules juvenile race

By Musong R. Castillo

CARMONA, CAVITE—OUTSIDER DEFIANT watched a field of speedballs sputter in the final 400 meters yesterday before making her move, finishing with a blinding burst of speed with a resurgent Val Dilema aboard to rule the P3 million Philracom Juvenile Championships.

Dilema made Defiant run a patient race, watching the entries with speed battle it out for more than three-fourths of the way before asking for the juice in the final bend to win by two lengths over One Man's Soul, another longshot partnered by Lord Santos.

Listed under the Herma Farms of Hermie Esguerra, Defiant clocked 1-minute and 43 seconds for the mile as Dilema, who has been on the road to snapping out of a slump, also won his biggest race for the season.

Dilema did not hide his excitement, throwing his whip in the air upon crossing the finish at the ultra-modern San Lazaro Leisure Park here.

The win was just the fourth in 11 starts for the daughter of Self Feeder out of De Farge, but it was worth a lot with Defiant, who sold just P67,333 out of the total daily double handle of P1,138,389, winning P1.8 million for her efforts.

It also meant that the mighty Esguerra stables have won the last two big races disputed after Real Spicy's impressive conquest of a classy field in the Presidential Gold Cup two Sundays ago.

The racing season ends with the P2 million Classic Championship at the Santa Ana on Sunday.

One Man's Soul, the bay colt who stalked Pacman until the stretch, clearly ran out of steam when it mattered to settle for second place that was still worth P675,000 even as Dynamic Duo, the longest shot, rallied for third place under Dominador Borbe for P375,000.

Sugar Daddy was fourth worth P150,000, ensuring that none of the top three choices finished in the money with favored Don Luis, a colt who ran on this track for the first time, finishing fifth before Macho Man, Pacman and Lancia Stratos.

Conquistaroyale, the longest shot in a lean, four-horse field, came from behind earlier to nip Legendary by a nose and rule the P500,000 Philracom Invitational Trophy race held in honor of the late, esteemed trainer Ernesto Falcon.

The two-year-old bay daughter of tested American stallion Conquistarose out of Royal Heart came darting out from the tail of the pack under Jeffrey M. Ladiana for the P300,000 top prize. She clocked an impressive 1:29.5 for 1,400 meters.

Legendary, a two-year-old chestnut colt piloted by veteran Roberto Basco, settled for the P112,500 runner-up's purse, while Perfect Revenge salvaged third worth P62,500.

Verdadera, the Louie Balboa-ridden filly who was sent off as the outstanding pick after cornering P831,300 out of the total daily double pool of P1,497,791, faded in the final bend to check in dead-last worth P25,000.

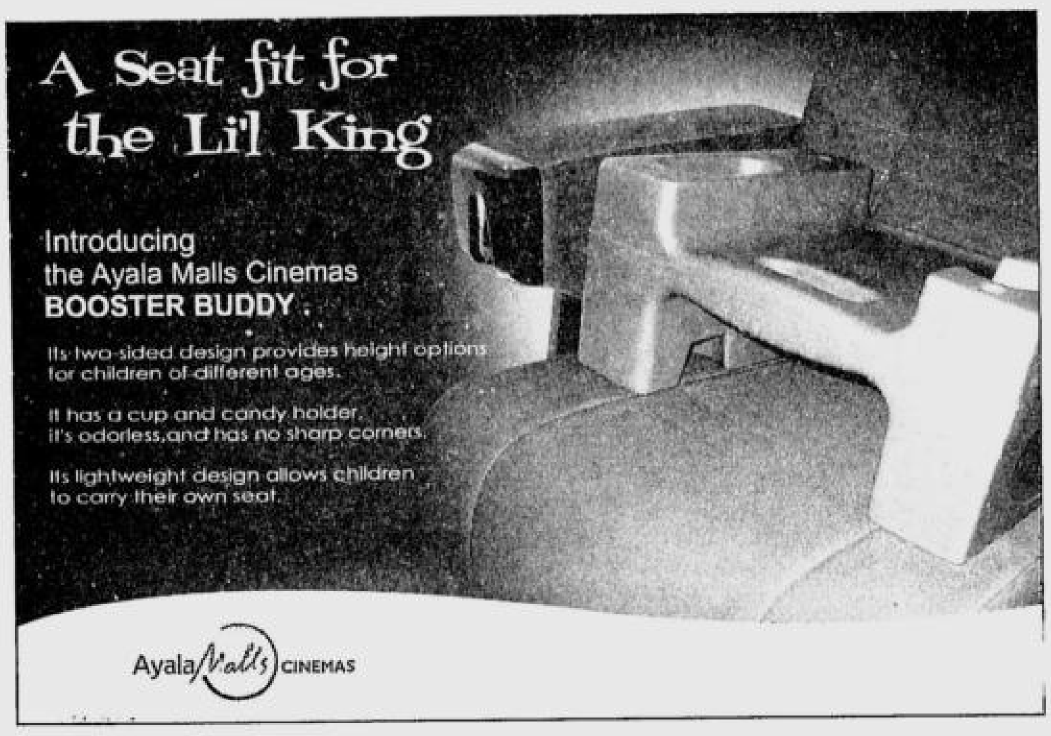
Fuerte wrests kiddies crown

VINCENT JOSEPH Fuerte of Tanyag Elementary School downed Aaron Sopungco in 45 moves of a Queen's Pawn game in the fifth and final round to rule via tiebreak the December edition of the MCC Kiddies Standard chess tourney at St. Francis Square in Mandaluyong City.

The 10-year old Fuerte, who posted 4.0 points with four wins and one loss, actually tied for 1st to third -3rd places with Christine Laz and Claudio Olar Jr. However, due to better tie-break, Fuerte claimed his first MCC kiddie title.

Laz, 12, of San Francisco High School upset top seed Kristian Cristobal in the final round and took the runner-up honors. Claudio finished 3rd.

Adjudged best category performers were: Andrew Sopungco (6-under); Eric Robert Yap (8-under); Fuerte (10-under) and Laz (12-under).Other top finishers were: Cristobal (4th); Camila Buduan (5th); Mark Anthony Trinidad (6th); Aaron Sopungco (7th) and Yap (8th).



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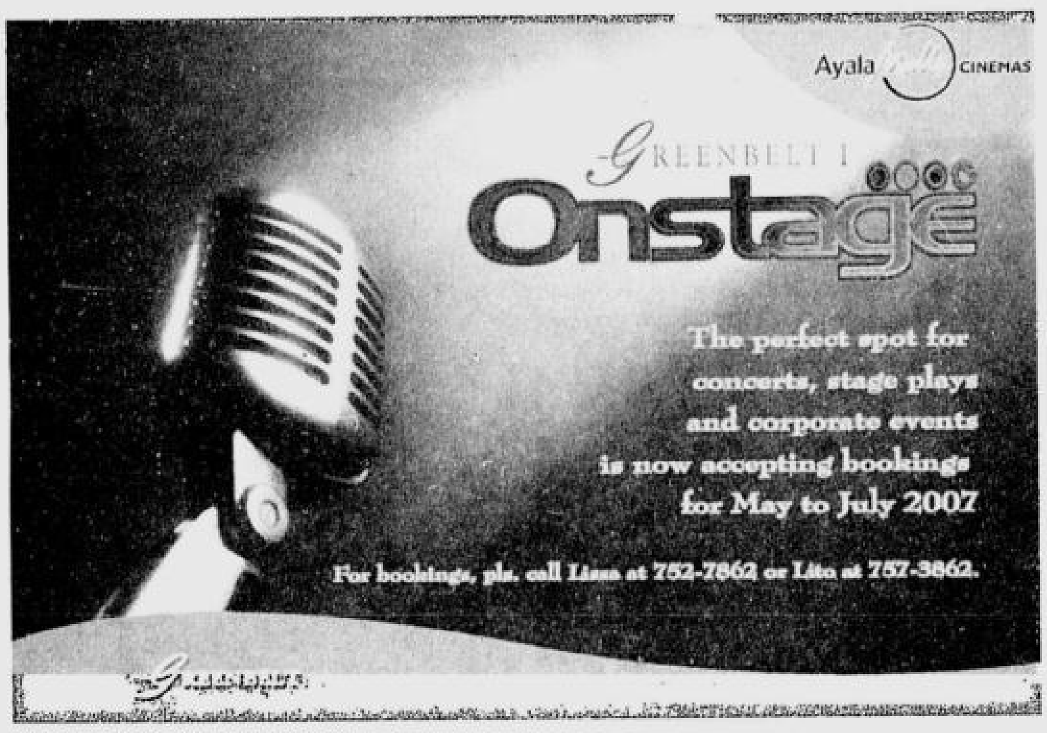

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE Monday, December 25, 2006

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	Nickelodeon				TNA Wrestling		Metro		Big News	Totoo TV		Global Shockers		Wow Maling-Mali Bytes	Sentro	Far Fetched		Araw-Araw Premyo Sa Nasibo	Simbang Gabi
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Inocente Do Ti	Noya, Ikaw Ba To?		Pangako Sa 'Yo	TV Patrol World		Kapamilya Deal Or No Deal	Super Inggo (8:15 PM)		Maging Sino Ka Man	Princess Hours		Bandila	Real Pinoy Fighter	Mirada De Mujer
AXN		The Amazing Race Asia		The Amazing Race Asia		The Amazing Race Asia		The Amazing Race Asia		Keith Barry: Extraordinary		The Ultimate Fighter (Season II)			30 Seconds To Fame	House (Season II)		Nip/ Tuck 2	
bTV	PBA TV	TV Shopping		Wheel of Fortune NBA Week Special					NBL: Razorbacks vs. Kings				NBA Live	NBA Stories: G. Arenas	NBA 2005-2006 Lakers @ Miami				
Cartoon Network																	Aqua Teen Hunger Force		
Cinema One		Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayo Ngayon?				Nasaan Ang Puso?				Puso Ng Pasko				Mga Munting Tinig				Mano Po 2	
Cinemax			The Stars Fell On Henrietta				Kiss And Tell (5:25 PM)			Scam				The Stepford Wives (2004)				The Bodyguard	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Living Golf/ Revealed/Main Sail/Art of Life		Your World Today	
Crime/Suspense		CIS Chronicles: Cold Case Files		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Profiler		City Confidential		Law and Order		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Revelations		The Unit		Threshold	
Discovery Channel				Monster Garage		Secrets Of The Valley Of Kings		Deadliest Catch		Wild Discovery		Tribal Life		Conspiracy Files		I Shouldn't Be Alive		Deadliest Catch	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouseworks/ Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol	Lilo & Stitch	Emperor's New School/I'll Be Home For Christmas	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Suite Life Of Zack And Cody		Buzz On Maggie/ Mr. Bean The The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Extreme Programming Sports Max 2006/07		Asian 9-Ball Tour San Miguel			Asian 9-Ball Tour San Miguel			Atlantic Coast Conf. Holy Cross Vs Duke				Sportscenter Asia	Women's Pro Billiards		Women's Pro Billiards		Sportscenter Asia
ETC	Friends	Beauty And The Geek		Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Project Runway 2		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		America's Next Top Model 5		ET Weekend	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen (Degeneres) Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	The Biggest Loser 1		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
Fox News		Beltway Boys	Fox News Watch	Fox Report Sunday		Bulls & Bears	Cavuto On Business	Forbes On Fox	Cashin' In	Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Makita Ka Lang Muli	Kapuso Movie Festival				Ghost Fighter	Jewel In The Palace		24 Oras	Captain Barbell	Atlantika	StarStruck: The Next Level	Bakekang	A Rosy Life (9:15 PM)		Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita		Saksi	
Hallmark Channel				Judging Amy		Just Cause		Mcleod's Daughters		Strong Medicine		Family Law		Judging Amy					
HBO		The Polar Express			Coach Carter (4:45 PM)					Shrek 2				Batman Begins				After The Sunset (11:15PM)	
Hero TV	Mythic Warriors	Sunny Pig	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Saiyuki Reload	Naruto	Monkey Turn	Gundam Seed Destiny	Full Metal Panic	Galaxy Angels	Voltes V Evolution	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Astroboy	Three-Eyed One	Naruto	Ganbaruger	Mythic Warriors	Yu-Gi-Oh GX
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Kusinada Kontra Komen		Japan Video Topics/ Anis		Japan Video Topics/ Anis		Travel Philippines	Japan Video Topics/ Anis	EBC Earth Files	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV		Bottomline		Afterburn		Cinema Tech	Evolver	Beat The Geeks	Street Smarts	Mad TV		That 70s Show	Trigger Happy TV	Jack's Booth				The Late Show David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network	Get Color	30 Minute Meals	Sweet Dreams	Rachel Ray		Smart Solutions	Embellish This	Barefoot Contessa	Everyday Italian	Martha		El Extra: Motorola Fashion Week Moments		Rachel Ray		Isaac		Radical Sabbatical	Genuine Article
MTV Philippines		MTV Hits	8th & Ocean		Trick It Out	8th & Ocean	MTV Hits	Rockista on MTV	MTV Hits	Get Spotted	MTV Hits	MTV Hits	MTV Music Remedy	Trick It Out	8th & Ocean	Celebrity Deathmatch	Jams	VH1 All Access: M. Jackson's Shocking Moments	
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXilog	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mobile MYX Top Picks		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXilog
National Geographic		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Inside		Showreal Asia		Top 5		Nat'l Geographic Specials		WOW!		Top Gun Week		Triumph Of Life		ShowReel Asia S3	
NBN					Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Siya?	Teledyaryo W/ Ray Langit & Angelique Lazo		Tinig Na Bayan (Kapihan Ng Bayan)		Dial M		Teledyaryo Final Edition		World Pool Championship					
Net 25	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	In Focus	Euromaxx	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		News Beat (Live)		OpenLine Live	Kapatid Sa Hanapbuhay	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		World Report	In Focus	DWTV Journal News	Euromaxx
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone/ The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	Danny Phantom	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Unfabulous	Drake & Josh - Go Hollywood			Romeo	As Told By Ginger	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Suicide Commandos				Alindog				Christmas Special				Andres Manambit				Nena
Qtv	Pawnshop No. 8	Samurai X	Hikaru No Go	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Winter Sonata	Irene	Emperor Of The Sea	Takeshi's Castle	H3O Hahaha...Oyel		News On Q	Sapulso		Irene	Overseas Fil Wiress
RPN 9	TV Shopping	Buhay Pinoy Sa Telebisyon		TBA	Mr. Fighting	RPN Aksyon Balita		Complete Savages	Jake In Progress	Score Tactics	GBB	Movie Monday				Newswatch Now	Go Negosyo		Kaphan
SBN 21								Sony Music Video				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Music Video		Sony Music Video	
Solar Sports						WNCAA		Billiards: US 9 Ball		Sagupa		Spanish League Barcelona vs R. Sociedad				Sports Year In Review		NFL Football Bengals @ Broncos	
Star Movies		Jumanji (3:15 PM)				Home Alone 2: Lost In New York				Just Friends (7:15 PM)				National Treasure				Noel (11:15PM)	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Desire: Table For Three		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	Life With Bonnie	Everybody Loves Raymond	The King Of Queens	Becker	For Better Or For Worse		Seinfeld	Life With Bonnie
Studio 23		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXilog	Blog	Pinoy Dream Academy	Wazzup Wazzup	The Amazing Race	Lost (8:15PM)		Alias		News Central	Rachel Ray (10:45PM)		Travel Time
UnTV				KNC Show	Kakampi Mo Ang Batas		Kaka at Clare Kaagapay Nyo		Public Hearing	Make My Day		Ang Dating Daan (8:15 PM)							

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RP posts current account surplus of $3.3B

Oil prices seen easing early next year

By Abigail L. Ho

OIL PRICES ARE LIKELY TO stabilize and even soften by January or February, particularly as the increasing use of alternative fuels is expected to reduce petroleum demand, a consumer watchdog has said.

"Prices will soften and level off by January or early February. Iraq will also start production soon. And alternative fuels are increasingly coming in," Consumer and Oil Price Watch chair Raul Concepcion said.

He said the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries would not likely keep prices at the current $60-a-barrel range when Iraq and other non-Opec producers either start producing oil or step up current production.

Also, the growing use of alternative fuels would likely dampen demand for petroleum products, he said.

"Once you decide to go for alternative fuels, you'll never go back to oil," he said.

The Biofuels Act of 2006 is set to be signed into law any time soon, following its passage at the two houses of Congress.

Under the Biofuels Act, all diesel-fed vehicles should use a minimum 1-percent biodiesel blend within three months of the effectivity of the law. Gasoline, on the other hand, should have at least a 5-percent ethanol blend within two years of the law's effectivity.

The mandated blend will rise to 2 percent for biodiesel after two years, and to at least 10 percent for bio-ethanol after four years.

Should there be supply problems, the minimum mandated blend could be brought down, but only within the first four years of the implementation of the law. After this period, the mandated blend could no longer be decreased.

Apart from the ready market for biofuels that the law creates, the Biofuels Act also pro-

OIL/ B3

Strong OFW remittances offset outflow due to loan prepayments

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES POSTED A CURRENT ACCOUNT SURPLUS OF $3.3 billion in the first nine months of the year, dwarfing the $995-million windfall in the same period last year, as record-high inflows from overseas Filipino workers more than compensated for the country's trade deficit.

The current account is a major component of the balance of payments (BOP), which measures the foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world. In the BOP, any transaction which gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident like importation or debt servicing is a deficit item while any which gives rise to a receipt like borrowing, exporting or inward remittance is a surplus item.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported that the sharp increase in the current account surplus for the first nine months had contributed to the $2.62-billion BOP surplus during the period. The current account also easily offset the deficit in the capital and financial account, which posted a net outflow of $710 million or a reversal of the net inflow of $5 billion a year ago.

The deficit in the capital and financial account, which includes debt, foreign direct and portfolio investment flows, was due to the repayment and pretermination of some of the country's external debts.

"The ample foreign exchange liquidity from the strong current account receipts and the net inflows in foreign direct and portfolio investments, coupled by the appreciation of the peso, encouraged the public and some private borrowers to prepay part of their foreign borrowings," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

"The pretermination of loans and bonds payable, amounting to $1.4 billion, reduced the capital and financial account balance. Without the prepayments, the BOP position would have been stronger by the same amount," Tetangco said.

The BSP chief said the current account surplus, equivalent to about 4 percent of the country's gross domestic product, was driven by higher inflows in current transfers as well as a lower deficit in the trade-in-goods and services accounts, which negated the higher deficit in the income account.

RP POSTS/ B3

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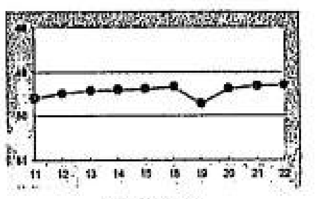

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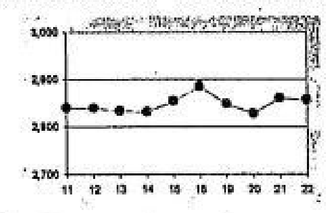
STOCK MARKET

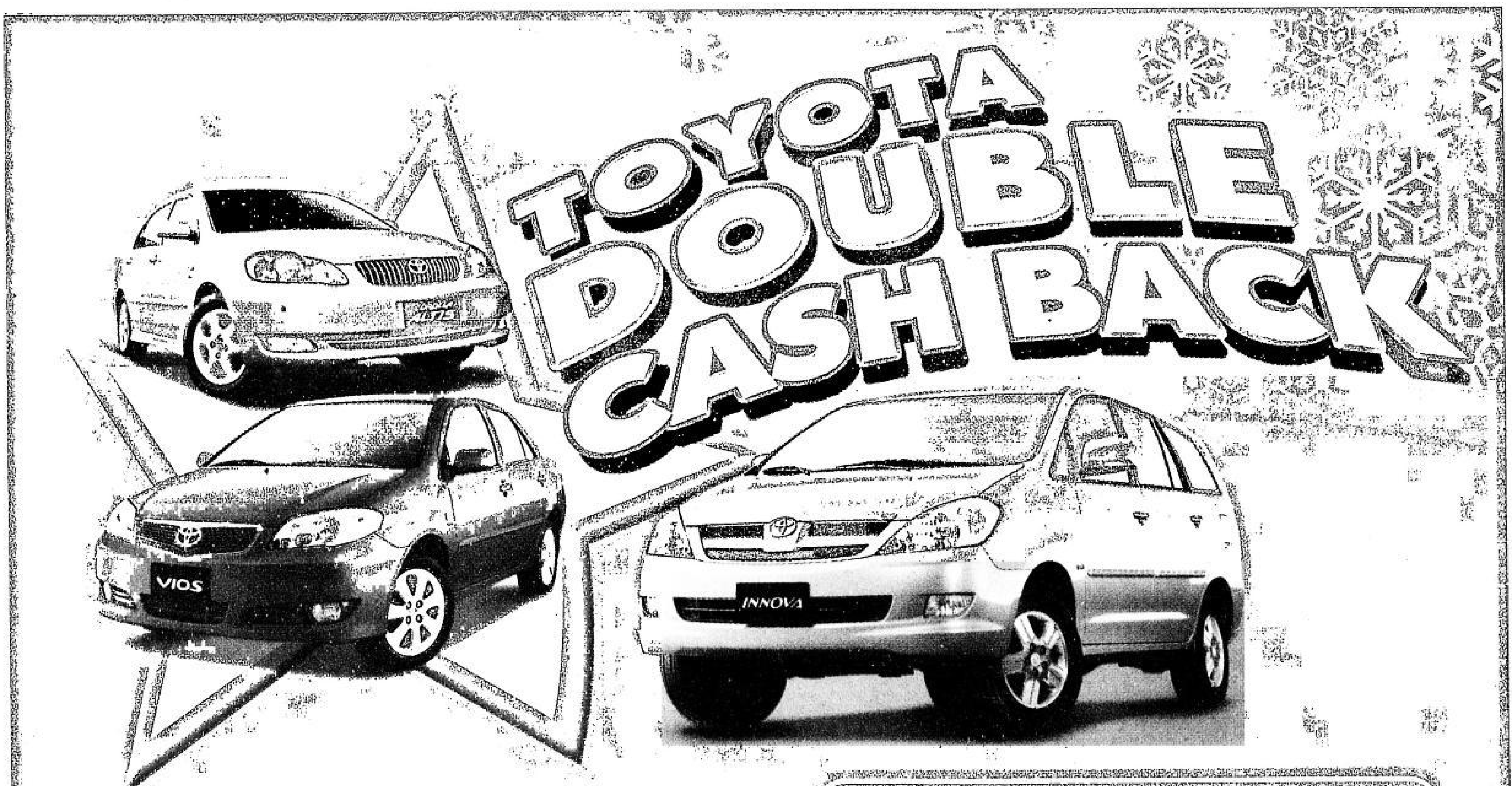


Window-dressing seen lifting stocks

TRADITIONAL YEAREND WINDOW-DRESSING is expected to lift share prices, when trading resumes tomorrow.

Financial markets are closed today for a regular holiday.

Stock prices closed lower on Friday on profit-taking ahead of the long Christmas holiday weekend, but dealers said investors are expected to come back to snap up undervalued issues.



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All I want for Christmas. . .

People who 'have everything' reveal their wishes this Yuletide

By Margie Quimpo-Espino and Tina Arceo-Dumlao

BUSINESSMONDAY poses the question—Name one material and nonmaterial wish this Christmas—to the country's top CEOs. Here are their answers.

SY

More shopping

Material—I wish people will shop a lot more. Nonmaterial—I wish for more unity and peace in our country.

Tessie Sy, vice chair, SM Investments Corp.

Nintendo Wii

GOKONGWEI

Material—Nintendo Wii. Heard it's easy to play, for a guy who does not know how to play complicated video games. Nonmaterial—a good golf swing. Still a 30 handicap after attempting to play golf for almost 20 years. And more free time for family holidays.

Lance Gokongwei, executive vice chair, JG Summit Holdings Inc.

A white Christmas

CUISIA

My wish is to be able to spend Christmas and New Year in NY so we get to experience a white Christmas. We have two daughters in NY. I also wish that this year I will be able to spend more time meditating and imbibing the true meaning of Christmas and the Feast of the Mother of God on January 1st.

Jose L. Cuisia, president, Philamlife

KATIGBAK

More time

A watch that has 48 hours and more down time in a day

Mario Katigbak, Bvlgari Philippines

Home for girls

BELO

I would like someone to give me a large, beautiful villa where I can take care of homeless girls. I want to adopt orphaned or adopted girls. I'll take care of them and be their coach because one of my dreams is to be a life coach.

Nonmaterial wish—I want to be closer to Jesus. I want to learn to pray. You realize that all the success and the material wealth in the world are not what count. It's not what will make you happy.

Dr. Vicki Belo, medical director, Belo Group

MATEO

More toys to give

I wish the government will spend our taxes in preventing disasters to happen than just in rescue and relief operations. I wish I have more toys I can share with Gawad Kalinga kids and street children.

Med Mateo, president, Philips Philippines

Rare diamond

TUMPALAN

A 10-carat rare, red or pink diamond!

I have a long list of nonmaterial things—time to continue the meaningful work that I'm doing now and more quality time to spend with those I love. I look forward to restful days were I get to enjoy life's simplest pleasures.

Doyee Tactacan-Tumpalan, president, First Quadrant

Economic takeoff

ROMERO

First the nonmaterial wish, I really wish that the economy would already take-off next year so that the Philippines could be propelled to its tiger form again and uplift the lives of many of our fellow countrymen. For material gift, any gift from the "baon" of my kids would suffice, as that is what I really call gifts coming from the heart. Have a joyous Christmas season to all.

Michael L. Romero, president, Harbour Centre Port Terminal Inc.

REYES

Expansion

May God bless our expansion program for Godiva skin care products and Godiva Skin Station outlets. For nonmaterial, I pray for Chin-Chin Gutierrez who was hurting while trying to save her very sick mother in a fire that razed their home. We just signed up Chin-Chin to be the endorser of Godiva Skin Station.

Fred Reyes, president, Godiva

Prosperity

PEDRO

Wish for nonmaterial is that God will bring our country to prosperity. I have no nonmaterial wish because God has given me everything I need.

Cecilio K. Pedro, president and CEO, Lamoiyan Corp. (makers of Hapee toothpaste)

Sell more insurance

COYUITO

Nonmaterial: Have more time to stop long enough and think about the people we love and why we love them…

Material: Be able to sell more life insurance—the tangible expression of such love.

Peter Coyiuto, president, First Guarantee Life Assurance Company Inc.

PBA title

REYES

A PBA title this conference, the lifting of Fiba suspension, perfect health for my family and players. More business for my businesses, and to become a scratch player in golf.

Chot Reyes, president, Coachcom.Inc.

Time with family

Time with the family and seeing them grow as individuals... and seeing the country move forward ... making a difference in the community and country ... building a brighter future for this great country!

Roberto E. Aboitiz, chair, Aboitiz Land Inc.

GDP growth

PADERANGA

I wish for 8 percent GDP growth for eight years, a nice vacation and compassion and courtesy among all.

Cayetano Paderanga Jr., president, CIBI Information Inc.

Peace of mind

Peace of mind and healthy body. As for material, a Suzuki Swift car!

Patrick Gregorio, chief marketing officer, Microtel Suites

Out of boom-bust cycle

CUA

I got my wish when Toyoto surprised me with a call that the car I wanted could be delivered before Christmas day. On the nonmaterial, I wish that the Philippines will finally bail out of this boom-bust economic cycle that has been principally responsible for the poverty in the country.

Johnlu Koa, president, French Baker Inc.

Increase in sales

Material: A 25 percent increase in our retail sales this December over last year.

Nonmaterial. More forgiveness and love in the family, workplace, in the Church and the entire country. A real transformation of hearts.

Manuel Siggaoat, chair, Manel's Leathergoods

SIGGAOAT

More investments

ANTONIO

My wish for Christmas is good health and a good economy and also more foreign investments.

Jose E.A. Antonio, chief executive, Century Properties Inc.

Money and health

OCIER

All the money to fulfill my worldly needs, and good health to enjoy those needs.

Willy Ocier, director, Belle Corp.

Voltes V robot

JUAN

I want a Voltes V robot that's available again in the market. I want it as a gift because I did not get one when I was young. As for nonmaterial wish, I want all Filipinos to have renewed pride in being a Filipino and that we start loving our country more.

Rommel Juan, president, Binalot Inc.

Planting the seed (of prosperity)

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Cynthia V. Subijano

I ASKED A GROUP OF MAP MEMBERS COMposed of Malou Cristobal, Mabs Juan and Lino Zapanta how they feel poverty could be solved. They echoed what we all have in mind… Education.

Education can cross the barriers of poverty if government and private sector can join hands in planting a seed to grow for the next decade. Vice President Noli de Castro's idea of pushing tech-voc education is a step in the right direction. But it is wanting in creating an even playing field, so to speak. It will not provide equal opportunities, although it can help one get employed.

The extended family system, "*utang na loob*" and respect to elders and parents have somehow insulated families from sure hunger. It is common to see homes shared by many family members and their families. Whoever has the job provides for everyone. These values can be harnessed to generate the "seeds of prosperity" for the next generation.

A good case in point is Salvador "Joyjoy" P. Escaño, founder of Pryce Group. I worked with with him when I headed the Property Development Division of one of his companies. He is the most successful among his siblings and town mates in Hinundayan, a small town in Leyte. While in his mid-20s, word got around in their town that Joyjoy, then a junior bank officer, made it good in Manila.

What was a modest achievement in Manila was a big deal in Joyjoy's town. His relatives trooped to Manila to ask his help for jobs. Joyjoy welcomed them to his apartment and set them up for job interviews with friends. He knew their chances were slim, but he could not find it in his heart to tell them. They stayed and grew in number.

So when the opportunity to assume ownership of a small liquefied gas distribution business came up, he hired all of them. He also rented a place for them to stay. They in turn rewarded him with hard work and loyalty that saw his small business grow into one of the major players in the LPG importation and distribution network to include the manufacturing of oxygen in the Visayas and Mindanao.

He branched out into the hotel business with Pryce Plaza and developed subdivisions. He built Pryce Tower, the first high-rise office condominium in Davao City.

These projects created many jobs in Mindanao and the Visayas. I also feel proud in having worked with Don Tomas "Tom" Aguirre. Implementing his vision of providing homes to every Filipino family and contributing to the economic growth of the country through job creation were something I cherish to this day.

Education should make good citizens of our children, it should develop in them strong moral values. This type of education should be available to all children, or at least to one child in a poor.

Let me call these children, Seeds. Parents will be advised to send the best and the brightest among their children to be the family's "seed" to better the chances at success.

Seeds can start as half board scholars in public schools. Half board scholars will have locker rooms, shower facilities, meals, all school needs and after school facilities to use for academic activities. After-school hours will include lessons in value formation and some responsibilities in the kitchen, garden and other facilities that they share with fellow Seeds. Seeds go home at night and return to school the next morning to shower and have breakfast with fellow Seeds.

Half boards can be implemented in the primary grade until high school.

In college, Seeds are on full board in college campuses. What I have in mind is the setting up of a special curriculum in regional state universities. Value formation and good citizenship courses will be emphasized. It will be the civilian counterpart of a Philippine Military Academy. All Seeds' needs will be provided for. Family visits will include counseling sessions to family members for a better understanding of Seeds because after Seed graduates, his family will never be the same again. For the Seed will become the bearer of hope and pride in the family. He will be a model in the community. He will take on the task of nation building and improving the life of his family and help others.

Seeds will have no problem getting jobs. He will surely be supported by government and corporate Philippines will give him the opportunity he deserves because his success will be their success. He will be our best bet at marginalizing poverty in our country.

Funding can come from government budget, donations from big corporations. What we need is the political will and to recognize that poverty is not just a problem of government, but ours as well.

(The author is president of Networth Land Management Corp. This article reflects her personal opinion. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

Business cycle of Christmas

By Eduardo A. Morató Jr.
Professor, Asian Institute of Management

"IF YOU CANNOT SELL A PRODUCT during Christmas, you cannot sell it at all."

This is the advice we give at the Asian Institute of Management to MBA students who opt to do a venture thesis. Rather than write the usual thesis, they conceptualize a product or service, subject it to market tests, develop the prototype, and establish a commercial enterprise.

The MBA students use their summer vacation to conduct their studies and tests. Product development and launching happen between July and September. By October or November, they should be joining bazaars and flea markets to determine customer acceptability. The reaction of the buyers during these trial selling stints is used to make improvements. December is the right season to institutionalize the sale of the product or service in stores or formal market outlets. If the students fail to sell in December, they are most probably doomed to fail their thesis.

Longest in world

The Christmas season in the Philippines is considered to be the longest in the world. Within this period, businesses generate a disproportionately large percentage of their annual sales. Big ticket items like appliances and furniture move fast after the 13th and 14th month bonuses are given.

For the big boys in executive row, this is the time to buy their big toys. Plasma TVs, complete with "sensurround sounds," and laptops are the favorite splurges. For the big girls, this is the time to upgrade the home a notch higher. Of course, toys, clothes and shoes are frenziedly bought by everybody else. And then, there are the token gifts one gives to officemates, neighborhood friends and group mates. Bric-a-bracs and all sorts of "cutesy" gifts spill out of novelty shops. As for the hapless receiver of these tokenisms, the choice is to recycle the gifts or let them accumulate dust for a while before dispensing with them.

One of the most disparaging gifts is the annually annoying fruit cake. For most people, they taste horrible. So, these fruit cakes are quickly given away.

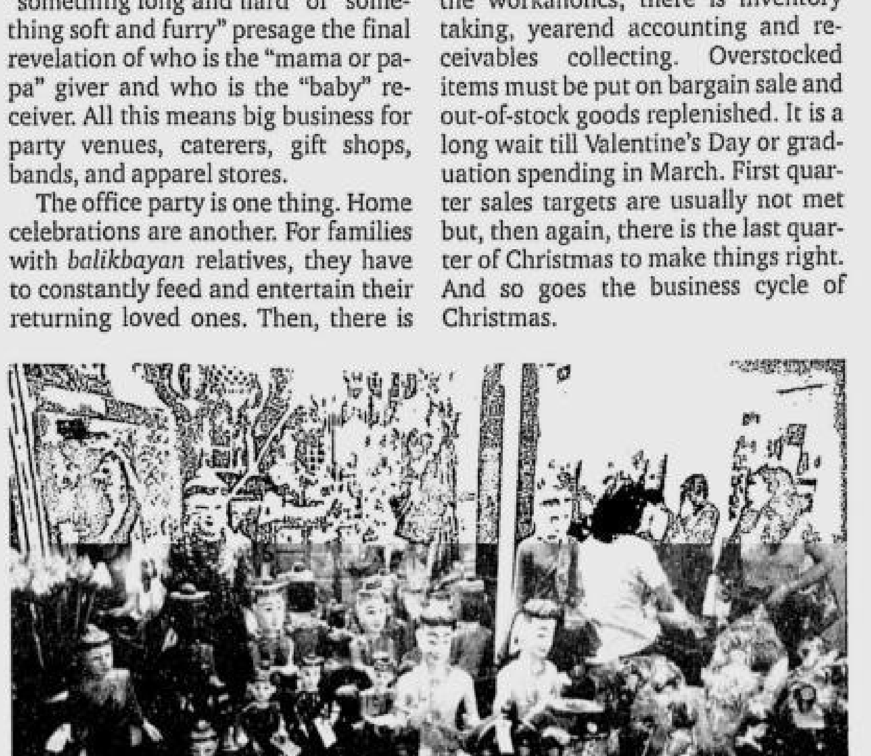
Business for party venues

For Filipinos the Christmas season is an endless stream of parties. Hotels and restaurants are fully booked. The grand finale is the company shebang. Bands are hired. Raffle prizes are solicited. Song and dance numbers are rehearsed. Costumes bought. Exchange gifts with daily themes like "something long and hard" or "something soft and furry" presage the final revelation of who is the "mama or papa" giver and who is the "baby" receiver. All this means big business for party venues, caterers, gift shops, bands, and apparel stores.

The office party is one thing. Home celebrations are another. For families with *balikbayan* relatives, they have to constantly feed and entertain their returning loved ones. Then, there is the highlight celebration of "noche buena" or the Christmas eve repast. Afterwards, the bulging Christmas tree disgorges its bounty to eager boys and girls and appreciative parents, uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents. A week later, the New Year merrymaking must be planned. Noisemakers, firecrackers and another round of meals end the exhausting, debilitating and impoverishing Christmas season. This is the final hurrah for busy businessmen who want to exploit Christmas to the hilt.

January hangover

January is a hangover. Businesses shift to a slow crawl. The huge profits from the Christmas season are converted to hard-earned vacations. For the workaholics, there is inventory taking, yearend accounting and receivables collecting. Overstocked items must be put on bargain sale and out-of-stock goods replenished. It is a long wait till Valentine's Day or graduation spending in March. First quarter sales targets are usually not met but, then again, there is the last quarter of Christmas to make things right. And so goes the business cycle of Christmas.


AFTER the Christmas high, business slows to a crawl in January.

Christmas, business and the poor

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

A BLESSED AND JOYFUL CHRISTmas to us all! Here's hoping that we keep Jesus Christ, the honoree of it all, at the center of our celebration and merry-making.

We all tend to look forward to it with such keen anticipation, and then it's suddenly over. Time and again we hear it said how nice it would be if it could be Christmas all year round. And this is because there is something about this holiday that brings about so many good things for people, and more importantly, in people.

Economic boost

For those of us who watch and feel the economy, Christmas means a seasonal boost in production, jobs and incomes. Manufacturers crank up production in anticipation of the holiday demand and retail establishments hire additional workers to meet the additional sales volumes and accommodate the holiday crowds. Filipinos from all over the world come home in droves—witness how the arrival area at the airport gets filled with a sea of humanity this time of year—and if they can't come home, they ramp up the remittances to their families.

All these show up in the macroeconomic indicators. Quarter-on-quarter GDP growth speeds up (translation: Production and incomes grow faster than usual), the unemployment rate moves down (translation: More jobs are available), inflation ticks up (translation: Prices rise faster than usual), and the peso appreciates (translation: The surge in dollar inflows leads to a lower peso-dollar exchange rate).

Except for the inflation uptick—and in the case of exporters, the peso appreciation—these are conditions that would make many a business person or worker wish for a year-long Christmas.

Magnified misery

But perhaps lost to many among us is the fact that this is a season when the misery of millions of Filipinos with no means or livelihood seems further magnified against the stark contrast of the seeming plenty among those for whom Christmas can truly be merry.

Close to 3 million Filipino workers continue to be without a job, which means that several more million of their family members continue to suffer from poverty and deprivation. The most recent hunger survey revealed a disturbing result: About one in five Filipinos, or a record 19 percent, suffered hunger due to poverty in the last quarter.

More than that, countless Filipinos are spending a bleak Christmas deprived of their homes, possessions and even loved ones, in the wake of recent typhoons Milenyo, Reming and Seniang. And since the holiday always comes at the heels of the typhoon season, there is in any given year always a sizable part of our population for whom Christmas is particularly bitter.

The already glaring gaps within our society thus get even more magnified at Christmas. This is why the holiday season ought to be an occasion for those of us who are more fortunate to ponder on how the seasonal generosity we engage in at this time of year can be made an all-year-round commitment, and how it can be made more meaningful and more lasting.

True giving

We are in fact celebrating the occasion of how God began to set the supreme example for all of us. By sending His Son to become one of us and live among us humans, God taught us that the only way to truly help the poor is to live with them, and feel with them.

It is so easy for most of us to give to the poor and the disaster-stricken, in the form of our discarded clothes and possessions, food, and cash. But that is not the kind of giving and sharing that is required of us. True giving and sharing is to feel with those to whom we give: To actually feel their pain and suffering, feel and share their aspirations and then give of ourselves beyond our mere possessions. This is what Jesus Christ did when He lived as a man among men. He came to help—indeed to save—us humans, by being one of us. If we wish to truly help those who are left behind and are marginalized amid seeming improvement in our economy, then it is Christ's example we are asked to follow.

Participating in poverty

I believe this is the reason why Gawad Kalinga and similar programs have met with wide support. These are initiatives that give people the chance to be with the poor, feel with the poor, and work with the poor, not merely give to the poor. Spending a few weekends actually building a home for someone whom one did not even know before is truly giving of one's self. It represents taking a concrete stake in another family's life. If you actually suffered aching muscles and other physical discomfort out of building a home and a livelihood for someone else, you will surely want to continue at least monitoring, if not getting continuously involved in improving that family's welfare.

One of the most meaningful experiences of my life was living for a few weeks among poor rice farmers in Bicol and Iloilo when I studied rice post-harvest technologies many years ago. It helped me understand what we otherwise would never understand if all we do to help the poor is to share our possessions, rather than share of our lives.

A blessed Christmas to us all—and may its spirit be with us all throughout the year!

Comments are welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

DTI keeps no-surcharge policy on card purchases

By Ronnel W. Domingo

TRADE SECRETARY PETER B. Favila said his department was pushing through with the implementation of an administrative order that bans surcharges on retail transactions using credit cards and similar modes of payments.

The DTI, thus, rejected the petition of the Philippine Retailers Association, which sought the "non-implementation" of Department Administrative Order No. 10.

"The DAO is in accordance with the law and that is what we are following in the (Department of Trade and Industry)," Favila said. According to the PRA, the "overly restrictive" DAO and the elimination of the dual pricing scheme practiced previously put the consumer at a disadvantage.

PRA said that under the DAO, the price information is not transparent, unlike in the previous pricing practice where buyers know how much they will pay when they pay cash or use card.

The consumer now has to negotiate individually with the retailer to get a better deal.

"It defeats one of the objectives contained in the declaration of basic policy of the Consumer Act, which is to provide information and education to facilitate sound choice to consumers," PRA added.

DTI should focus its attention on retailers who do not even have a price tag, or those who are not transparent in their pricing information, or who are misleading their consumers with their price schemes, the group said.

Favila, meanwhile, said there were now seven establishments against which the DTI had filed administrative charges for violating DAO 10 that took effect last Nov. 5.

"Usually, purchases using credit card are priced higher than those paid with cash, and this discriminates against the cardholders," Favila explained.

RP posts current account surplus of $3.3B

From page B1

The net inflows in the current transfers account increased by 13.7 percent to $9.6 billion due mainly to the robust inflows from remittances of non-resident OFWs.

Meanwhile, the trade-in-goods balance registered a narrower deficit of $5.15 billion, or an improvement of 15.2 percent from the year-ago level as the export growth of 16.9 percent outpaced the 11.4-percent expansion in the import bill.

The key export drivers were manufactured goods such as electronics, garments, chemicals, mineral and petroleum products.

The net outflow in the services account also narrowed by 52.6 percent to $507 million from $1.07 billion a year ago following the higher net inflows from travel, communication, computer and information and other business services.

The capital and financial account incurred a deficit as the other investment account deficit widened to $5.05 billion from only $794 million a year ago.

Direct investments grew by 67.6 percent to $1.57 billion owing to equity capital placements by non-residents combined with the improvement in the other capital account.

Among the recipients of these inflows were manufacturing, services, real estate, financial intermediation and construction industries.

Major investors were from the United States, Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Switzerland and Germany.

On the other hand, portfolio investment net inflows remained significant at $2.73 billion. However, this was 43.6-percent lower than last year's level following the pretermination by the BSP and the national government of its notes/bond payable and certain maturing bonds owed by the private sector.

Oil prices seen …

From page B1

vides incentives for the production, distribution and use of locally produced biofuels.

These include exemptions from the specific tax and value-added tax, as well as financial assistance from government financial institutions.

The bill likewise directs the gradual phaseout of the use of harmful gasoline additives within six months from the effectivity of the law.

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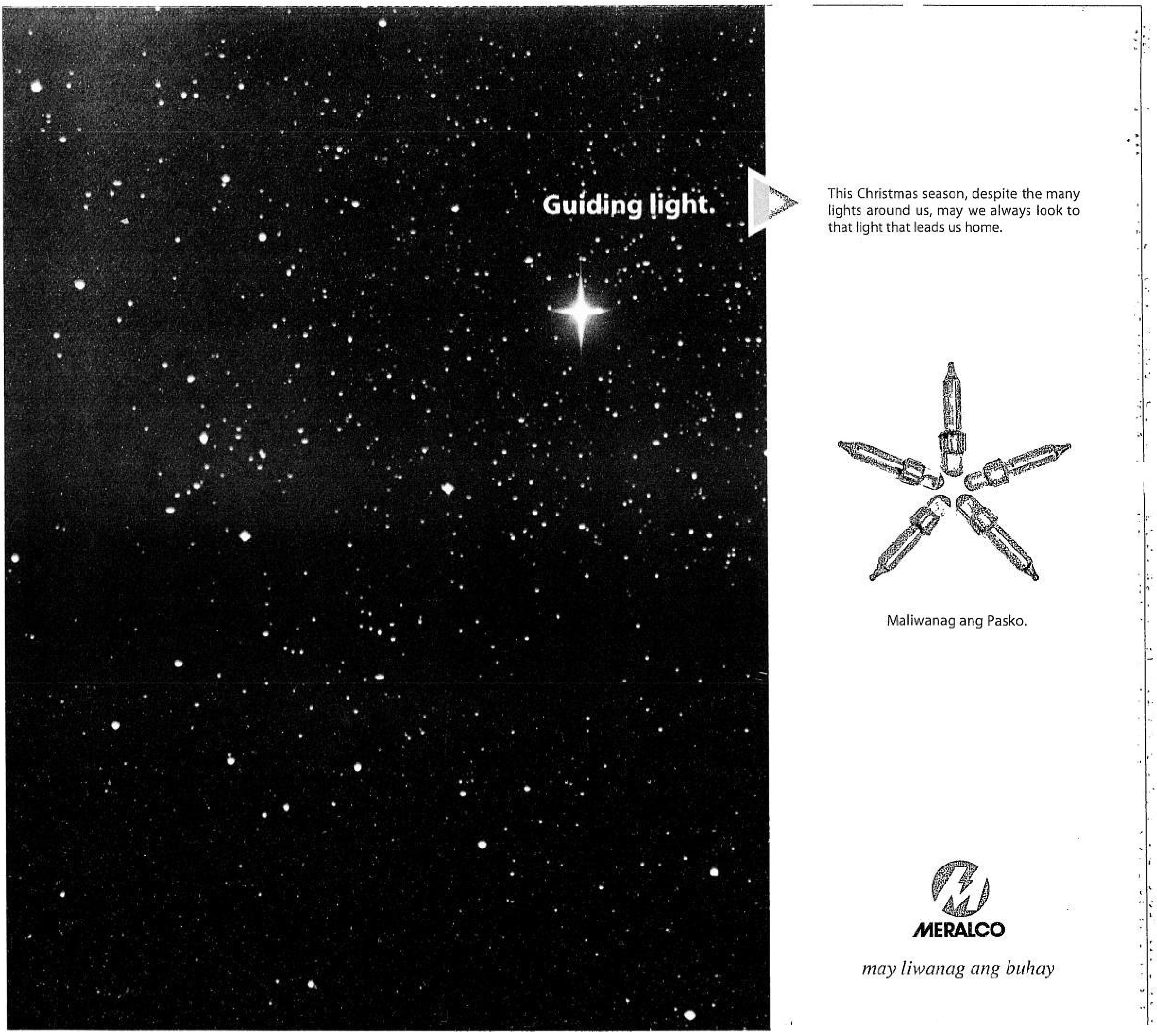

Guiding light.
This Christmas season, despite the many lights around us, may we always look to that light that leads us home.
Maliwanag ang Pasko.
MERALCO
may liwanag ang buhay

BPI made one man's dream come true

JOSE CARLOS CARI HAS WON A PRIZE JUST about anyone would envy - a posh studio unit at The Columns Ayala Avenue.

Cari found out on a Friday that he had won in BPI's Save Up, Move Up raffle promo, awarding him with a studio unit at The Columns Ayala Avenue. He had been getting ready to leave the house when he got the call from BPI on his phone.

He was sure his friends were playing a joke on him. "At first I thought it was not true but again, my relationship manager from BPI insisted that I won the grand prize, and she started to make sense, which thrilled me."

Cari first read about BPI's Save Up, Move Up raffle from the newspapers. He decided to join the promotion but did not give it much thought. "I was aware that there was a promo. I hoped to win the grand prize but I also thought it was impossible. I did not imagine myself winning it."

The themed raffle promotion, BPI Save Up, Move Up was launched in March 2006, providing BPI depositors a chance to upgrade their lifestyle. The promotion showcased three exciting prizes -- a chance to double deposits by as much as P500,000, a brand new Volvo V-50, and a studio unit at The Columns Ayala Avenue. The promo was launched in line with BPI's aim to bring its customers closer to their dream of a better life and a bright future.

The grand prize, the studio unit at The Columns Ayala Avenue is valued at almost three million pesos, developed by Community Innovations, an Ayala Land company. The stylish 30-sq.m. studio unit comes with modular closet and kitchen cabinet systems and complete toilet and bath fixtures. Strategically located at the corner of Ayala Avenue and Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, The Columns Ayala Avenue is in close proximity to the Makati Central Business District, shopping malls and other leisure destinations, making it an ideal choice, not only as a second home, but an investment as well.

Cari agrees that the condo unit is a good investment but for the mean time he has other plans with it. "My daughter who will be graduating from high school will stay in the condo in time for her college studies."

"The BPI Save Up, Move Up promo is an answer to my dream of owning a condo unit at the heart of Makati. Thank you BPI. This is a great Christmas gift to my family", Cari said with a smile on his face.

His happiness was evident during the recent Save Up, Move Up Grand Draw Awarding Ceremony. Held at The Columns Ayala Avenue, BPI and Community Innovations Inc executives took time off from their busy schedules to attend the celebration and congratulate Cari.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I expect acquiring a condo unit. I will definitely feel at home here - much like the way I feel every time I visit my BPI branch," Cari remarked.

A client for many years now, Cari has stayed with BPI because of its innovative products and services. He added, "BPI's EPS is very reliable. Plus, the people from BPI are friendly. They are always attentive to my needs and deliver their promises."

Indeed, BPI has not only stood witness, but has contributed to the various success stories of its customers. Yet it knows that it still has a lot to offer. Expect more innovations in 2007 as BPI strengthens its commitment to focusing on its customers' future and helping them go farther. Save up with BPI today.

GLOBE SHINES AT ARAW VALUES AWARDS

Globe Telecom and wholly-owned subsidiary Innove Communications bag honor at the recent Araw Values Advertising Awards. Globe Telecom received a Gold award for the company's 'Gold' TV ad in Branded Communications Category (Single Entry-TV). Meanwhile Innove's Touch Mobile also got a Bronze award for its "Kasangga" TV ad also in the same category. Holding the trophy are, from left, Globe public relations head Jones Campos, Harrison Communication's creative director Russel Molina, and corporate marketing head Amado Reyes Jr. The Araw Awards recognizes the advertising industry's most outstanding works that help promote and communicate Filipino values.

MAJA SALVADOR ENDORSES FRESHER

Popular young actress Maja Salvador recently signed a contract with Filipino company Lamoiyan Corp as the endorser of its new hypoallergenic feminine wash, Fresher. Maja is expected to capture the viewers' hearts via Fresher's TV ad campaign. The 18-year old Maja is better known for her notable performances in movies like 'First Day High' and 'Sukob' and an episode in 'Maalaala Mo Kaya'. She is regularly seen displaying her dancing prowess in ABS-CBN's Sunday noontime show, ASAP 06. The popular teen actress expresses her appreciation for Fresher's trust as she affirms her confidence in this world-class brand. She feels glad that she can now have a companion as she faces the challenges and enjoyments brought about by adolescence. Photo shows (from left) Chit Ramos, manager of Maja Salvador; Joel Pedro, executive assistant, Office of the CEO; Ding Salvador, managing partner of Lamoiyan Corp; Maja Salvador; Maricel Pangilinan, managing partner of Harrison Communications; Peter Paul Ang, marketing manager of Lamoiyan Corp; Victoria Chua, purchasing manager of Lamoiyan Corp; Delia Sze, marketing assistant of Lamoiyan Corp.

The Optometrist in a Rapidly Changing World of

A FIRST IN PHILIPPINE OPTOMETRY

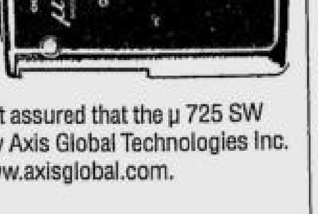
Five outstanding eye care professionals were given their well-earned recognition as the Philippines' first diplomates in optometry during PCO's Annual Meeting at Wack-Wack Golf and Country Club. Posing with their diplomate certificates are: (from left) Jesse Caguioa, OD, FPCO; Benita M. Soltura, OD, FPCO; Melissa B. Anglo, OD, FPCO; Cynthia V. del Mundo, Msc, MBA, OD, FPCO; and Antonio F. Joson Jr., OD, Fiacle, FPCO, secretary general, Asia Pacific Council in Optometry. Their new titles were conferred by Claro Cinco, OD FAAO, FPCO (4th from left).

ProductFILES

Honeywell Air Purifiers: The clean air experience

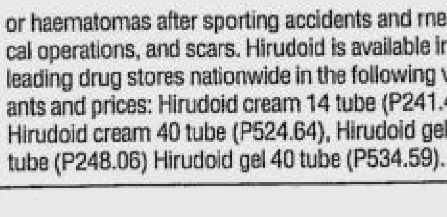
FIRECRACKERS HAVE BEEN DEFINITELY A PART of every Filipino family's midnight revelry every New Year. However, there is certainly no escaping the thick pall of smoke, haze, and smog that comes after. Sounds lethal especially to the delicate little lungs of your children? Well worry no more, because Honeywell, a recognized global brand in home environment products offers you a quick and easy solution to the impending pollution holiday. It offers an array of air purifiers with varying filtering efficiency and area coverage capacity to suit your different needs and requirements. What's more, it makes use of the safest and most effective process of filtration pollution control method, the Hepa (High Efficiency particulate air) cleaning system. Adapted by Honeywell enviracaire portable air cleaners, this system can efficiently remove 99.97 percent of airborne particles. Honeywell air purifiers are the best protection you could give your family and children against this season's harmful indoor air pollution. The choice of 8 out of 10 US physicians, it is likewise recommended by the American Lung Association and Association of Home Appliance Manufacturer (Aham) certified for air purification. So rev up for all the parties and welcome a year of safe clean air for your family, only from Honeywell.

The shock and waterproof Olympus µ 725 SW



SUCCEDING THE EISA-AWARD WINNING µ 720 SW, THE µ 725 SW is now waterproof to 5m and shockproof to 1.5m for the ultimate toughness, robustness and versatility. The stylish metal body is available in three striking colours: Titanium Grey, Deep Blue and Cherry Red. Image quality is as good as its tough physique, with a resolution of 7.1 mio pixels plus a 3x optical zoom (equiv. to 38-114mm). And thanks to BrightCapture Technology, great results are possible even in low-light conditions. No matter if snorkeling in the sea, mountain biking through the mud or snowboarding high up on the peaks - you can rest assured that the µ 725 SW won't let you down. Olympus Digital Cameras is exclusively distributed by Axis Global Technologies Inc. For more information on Olympus cameras and peripherals, log on to www.axisglobal.com.

Hirudoid back in the market



HIRUDOID, THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEDICATION for the treatment of varicose veins and other related skin conditions, is now back in the Philippines after a brief absence in the local market. A unit of Swiss company DKSH, Diethelm (Philippines) Inc is the distributor of Hirudoid in the Philippines. Diethelm is one of the leading distributors of pharmaceutical and consumer products in the country. The efficacy of Hirudoid in healing scars is also well documented. Studies show that it promotes regeneration of injured tissue, increases skin moisture and elasticity, and improves scar appearance. Hirudoid also effectively treats complications of varicose veins, bruises or haematomas after sporting accidents and medical operations, and scars. Hirudoid is available in leading drug stores nationwide in the following variants and prices: Hirudoid cream 14 tube (P241.43), Hirudoid cream 40 tube (P524.64), Hirudoid gel 14 tube (P248.06) Hirudoid gel 40 tube (P534.59).

The portal to a lavish lifestyle opens at Manhattan Garden City

A NEW HAVEN THAT GIVES YOU the power to go places is now at your reach. Set in the more peaceful northeastern suburban side of the Araneta Center, Megaworld Corp's Manhattan Garden City is the country's first ever garden-inspired, transit-oriented community that is connected to two existing mass- rail transit systems.

Undoubtedly a transportation sanctuary, MGC redefines convenience. Its Grand Transfer Pavilion Lobby that serves as gateway from your home to the rest of the world features a hotel-style lobby, a grand staircase and four passenger elevators that connect to the Gateway Mall and LRT-2 Aurora Boulevard station.

Because it is connected to the MRT-3 and LRT-2 mass transit systems, MGC's prime spot makes commuting much easier, giving you the option to travel in style and reach more of Metro Manila's choice destinations. For non-commuters, multi-level parking areas will also be accessible to each tower.

A shopaholic's dream, Manhattan Garden City gives easy access to the Araneta Center where you can enjoy a unique shopping and dining experience in its wide selection of malls: Gateway Mall, Rustan's, SM Shopping Center, Plaza Fair, Shopwise, Ali Mall and Farmer's Plaza. The Araneta Coliseum, world-renowned sports and entertainment complex, is also within this area.

Safety and security is also guaranteed. Experience a worry-free lifestyle with Manhattan Garden City's 24-hour security and controlled access points. These ensure the preservation of the safety and privacy of the residents.

Unwind and indulge as you take pleasure in a unique resort-style play area situated right where you live. The podium level of Manhattan Parkway features trellised walkways, jogging paths and a fitness station, along with an indoor sauna/spa and gym. For the athletic-type, there are the lap pool, outdoor spa, tennis/basketball court and children's wading pool and water play pool. MGC also boasts of a game room, a business center and a function room.

With Manhattan Garden City, a taste of sweet life in calm, refreshing environment that lets you get away from the hustle and bustle of the urban jungle is at hand.

For inquiries, visit the model units at the Manhattan Garden City showroom, 2nd Level Gateway Mall, Araneta Center, or call 810-3333, e-mail inquire@themanhattangardencity.com.

ClawDaddy Crab House and American Grill opens

IT TOOK THREE GENERATIONS TO POP this one out. What happens when the Big Daddy of crabs and seafood in the metro teams up with the country's Big Daddy of Southern American dining?

Raymund Magdaluyo of the Red Crab group teamed up with Murray Hertz of the New Orleans Restaurant to come up with ClawDaddy - Crab House and American Grill.

ClawDaddy is all and everything about what we feel like clawing when we eat out with friends and family: crabs, lobsters, oysters, and ribs.

Raymund's treasure chest has unloaded once more both classic and new crab favorites and soon-to-be favorites (Crab Maritess, Crab Singapura, Butter-Ginger Crab, Fidel's Pepper Crab, New Orleans Barbecue Crab, Crab Casino, and more). His ClawDaddy team shall also prepare an abundance of lobsters, prawns, and oysters in the menu, mostly inspired by Southern American cooking. Watch out for the Bloody Mary Oyster Shooters and the classic Oysters Bienville.

Mr. Hertz New Orleans' introduced baby back ribs in the country decades ago, long before everyone else did. Other New Orleans' classics to be brought to life include Cajun Shrimp Popcorn, Cajun Calamari, Navy Bean Soup, New Orleans Clam Chowder, Shrimp Etoufee, Riverboat Shrimps, and so many more.

Joining the group as executive chef is Peter Ayson, former sous chef of the award-winning gourmet breakfast restaurant Orange in Chicago, USA. Chef Pete is one of the best chefs in the country focusing on breakfast and American food.

Chef Peter will include in the menu mouthwatering and fall-off-the-bone barbecued ribs and chicken items roasted and flavored with sodas and fresh fruits. His ClawDaddy salads line up is mostly California inspired with items such as Santa Fe, Chop Salad, and Seared Tuna and Calamari Sálad.

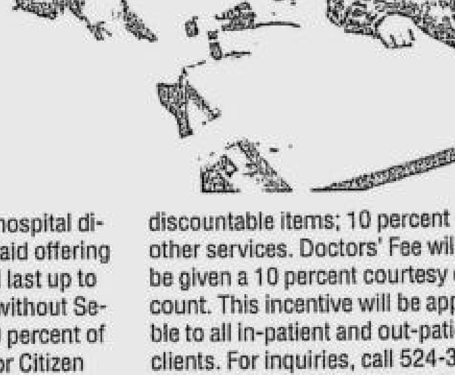
Other surefire menu darlings would be the Jambalaya and Crab skillet, Jambalaya and Ribs skillet, Vietnamese-style Grilled Lobster, Lemon Cream Mussels (mussels in light lemon cream soup), and Riverboat Shrimps (shrimps sautéed in Creole spices).

ClawDaddy Crab House and American Grill opens at The Ledge, 6/L Shangri-La Plaza Mall this Christmas. It will be managed and run by the same group heading Red Crab Seafood and Steaks, Seafood Club by Red Crab, Blackbeard's Seafood Island, Crustasia Asian Crab and Seafood House, Hula Hula Seafood and Barbecue House, Heaven 'N Eggs, and Cocorama.

AUTOZENTRUM BMW PARTNERS WITH GULF AIR

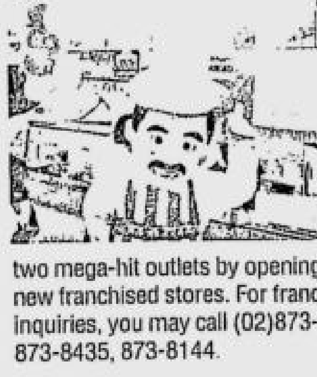
Autozentrum BMW Alabang partners with Gulf Air for its ongoing Live the BMW Life raffle promo. The 'BMW Life' is a roundtrip ticket for two to Germany via Gulf Air, an exclusive tour to the BMW Mobile Tradition, BMW Factory and BMW Museum in Munich, and an exciting Autobahn ride. Those who purchase a new or premium selection BMW car or motorcycle until Dec. 31 are entitled to join the raffle. Deadline of entries is on Jan. 14, 2007 and the raffle draw will be held on Jan. 15. Shown in the photo are Autozentrum BMW's Doris Pastoriza, marketing manager, Tey Sornet, general manager and Gulf Air's Roberto.Hukom, country manager. For more information, contact Autozentrum BMW at 772-6021 to 24.

MDH'S DECEMBER ANNIVERSARY OFFERING



In celebration of its 50th anniversary, Manila Doctors Hospital, Manila's first ISO certified hospital, announced that it will be providing discounts for hospital bills and all its diagnostic services. 'This is our way of saying thank you to all our clients of who have continued to support us throughout the years' said lawyer Pilar Almira, hospital director. Coverage for the said offering began last Dec. 8 and will last up to Jan. 8, 2007. For clients without Senior Citizen privileges, 10 percent of hospitals bills, with Senior Citizen privileges (SCP) 20 percent SCP on discountable items; 10 percent off on other services. Doctors' Fee will also be given a 10 percent courtesy discount. This incentive will be applicable to all in-patient and out-patient clients. For inquiries, call 524-3011, ext. 3120 and look for Susan Orosco.

LOTS'A PIZZA ADDED 3!



As they strive to become the no. 1 quick-serve parbaked pizza chain in the Philippines, Lots'A Pizza continuously expands its network of stores. Recently, they opened: 1.) Lots'A Pizza Mall of Asia; 2.) Lots'A Pizza Puregold Baliuag, Bulacan and 3.) Lots'A Pizza Puregold Qi Central-QC. The SM Mall of Asia store is exactly located at Ground Level - North Wing, SM Hypermart Food Stall, SM Mall of Asia. It offers affordable and quality pizzas for all SM Hypermart shoppers. Lots'A Pizza has also been a loyal partner of Puregold Price Club Supermarkets. When 2 new Puregold outlets opened at Baliuag - Bulacan and Qi Central - QC; Lots'A Pizza joined them on these two mega-hit outlets by opening 2 new franchised stores. For franchise inquiries, you may call (02)873-8414, 873-8435, 873-8144.

Painful truth behind hot gadgets

SINGAPORE—HOPING SANTA WILL SEND you an iPod, a Nintendo Wii or the latest mobile phone this Christmas?

Be careful what you wish for: it could come "painfully" true.

Sore thumbs, inflamed elbows and stiff shoulders are among the musco-skeletal injuries linked to excessive use of the popular high-tech games and gadgets that could be under the tree.

"This is a pretty big issue, especially as more and more people are using gadgets a lot more," said William Lenihan from Singapore's Osteopathic Pain Relief Center.

"These repetitive strain injuries (RSIs) are in the long term very detrimental to the whole body and once RSI comes on, its very difficult to get rid of," he told Reuters. "The secret to avoiding this is knowing when to stop." A few years ago, RSI only used to strike computer and jackhammer operators, who spent hours performing the same movement over and over again.

While the majority of IT users remain RSI-free, more and more people are becoming afflicted, with some children as young as seven developing symptoms, the British awareness group RSI Action said on its website (www.rsi-action.org.uk).

According to the group, RSI is on the rise because more people are "using more computers for more tasks, workplace stress is increasing, mobile communications are increasing and leisure use of games and iPods are increasing."

Health hazard

It appears too that the gadgets have the potential to become more hazardous as the technology advances.

As mobile phones get smaller, their keypads also shrink, requiring finer finger movements that could aggravate joints.

Some users of Apple's iPod music player have also complained about the intensive thumb movement, according to leading British-based online IT magazine www.bit-tech.net.

"Hospitals have reported an increase in RSIs of the thumb from usage of gadgets and mobile phones, primarily from sending sms (text messages)," Dr. Er Beng Siong of Singapore's Physiotherapy Associates said. "It's a disease of modern times."

Video game consoles can also contribute to RSI.

While sitting for hours on a sofa, clutching a joystick and staring at a television are the ideal way to unwind for many people, it could also be risky.

Daisuke Ito, the head doctor at Senzoku Orthopedic Plastic Surgery in Tokyo and who often treats RSI, said he expects to see more game-related cases in the future.

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Ouch factor

"Once you do suffer from tenosynovitis," he said, referring to a type of inflammation of the wrist and hand tendons, "we can treat it with shots. There's also medicine to ease the pain and braces to wear on the wrist.

"Of course, the most obvious way to treat it is to stop playing the game."

Popular game consoles, such as Nintendo's Wii—which has been flying off shelves worldwide—come with health warnings.

The Wii website (http://wii.nintendo.com/) urges players to take a break every 15 minutes. Sony's Playstation manual also asks users to take breaks and be aware of their posture while playing.

Experts say moderation, proper posture and stretching are key to preventing your high-tech presents becoming painful.

"People who work at a computer 8 hours a day are already doing a lot of damage," said osteopath Lenihan. "Then they go home and do some more. Prevention is always better than cure."

Reuters

Digital freaks' Christmas wish list

By Abigail L. Ho

GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN all people wanted for Christmas were the customary fruit cake, ham, *quezo de bola*, and their two front teeth.

These days, techies and non-techies alike have shifted their sights to the nifty gadgets that flood the market in all shapes and sizes.

Aside from the usual picks such as mobile phones and game consoles, on top of the digital freak's wish list are perennial favorites MP3 players, speakers, notebooks and digital cameras, according to local consumer electronics distributors Axis Global Technologies and Microwarehouse.

The 2GB Apple iPod Nano is one of Microwarehouse's bestsellers this month. At less than P10,000, music junkies can store up to 500 songs, podcasts and audiobooks into the compact and light device.

On Axis Global's end, one of its top sellers in December is the Creative Zen V-Plus music player, which boasts of a scratch-resistant, full-color 1.5-inch display. It can also record music directly from the CD player or other playback source.

If audio players sold like hotcakes this month for both Axis Global and Microwarehouse, the speakers and accessories that went with them also had their share of the limelight as among the top consumer favorites for the month.

Two speakers figured on Microwarehouse's Top 5 list for December. The IHOME iH5 Clock Radio Speaker combines the functionality of an iPod speaker dock and a traditional clock radio. It also has an auxiliary port that allows it to be used with audio devices other than iPods.

Another Microwarehouse bestseller for December is the DLO IBoom Travel Speaker, which works both as a speaker and a clock radio. Relatively compact, it can go from a user's bedside to wherever he wants to bring his music to.

For Axis Global, a December favorite is the Creative Xmod, which boasts of being an "instant entertainment center," giving basic, built-in sound a concert-hall quality.

The device restores the details and vibrance that music usually loses during MP3 compression. It can be used on any stereo speaker system or headphones, and can work with any desktop, notebooks and even Macs.

The more cash-rich gadget-lovers seem to not want to settle for small devices such as audio players and speakers this Christmas, as both Axis Global's and Microwarehouse's December bestsellers' list had notebooks on them.

A favorite among Mac users, customers snapped up the white MacBook 2.0GHz Intel Core 2 Duo this month, according to Microwarehouse.

Axis Global recorded Blue's Radon notebooks as some of its bestsellers for the month.

Digital cameras were also high up on this year's techie Christmas list, particularly the Olympus Mju 725SW 7.1-megapixel all-weather camera.

Ideal for families with children who like tinkering with gadgets as well as for adventure seekers, the camera is waterproof up to a water pressure equivalent to a depth of 5 meters and shockproof from heights of up to 1.5 meters.

Smart launches online billing

By Riza T. Olchondra

SUBSCRIBERS TO SMART COMmunications Inc.'s GSM postpaid service and Smart Bro can now check their billing statements more conveniently via the Internet with Smart Bills Online.

Smart Bills Online allows subscribers to view their bill in advance, or even those generated in the past two months. They can also save and print their billing statements without having to visit a Smart Wireless Center or call the Smart hotline.

For extra convenience, Smart GSM Postpaid subscribers will receive a monthly notification through text, informing them that their bill is ready for viewing online.

To avail of this service, subscribers need to register for free through Smart's website, www.Smart.com.ph.

They can select the Customer Service tab and choose either Smart Online to check their GSM Postpaid statement of account, or Smart Bro Online to check their Smart Bro bill.

Smart Bills Online Service is available to individual subscribers of Smart postpaid (Smart Gold, Addict Mobile) and Smart Bro subscribers.

As of end-November 2006, Smart has 22.9 million users on its network. Of these, 16.5 million are under the brands Smart Buddy, Smart Gold, Addict Mobile, Addict Mobile Prepaid, Smart Infinity, Smart Kid, Smart Kid Prepaid and Smart ACeS. Another 6.4 million subscribers are served through its subsidiary, Pilipino Telephone Corp., under the GSM brand Talk 'N Text.

Smart has also thrown its support behind a business forum for Filipino workers in Taiwan by offering SmartLoad and Smart Bro dealerships.

SmartLoad is the world's first and only electronic prepaid loading service that makes use of a Smart GSM cellular phone to load airtime into a Smart Buddy or Talk 'N Text GSM prepaid account.

Meanwhile, Smart Bro is Smart's wireless broadband service, which is available in packages that allow Smart retailers and dealers to set up mini-Internet cafés at a low cost.

"The fact that we have some 800,000 SmartLoad retailers in the country shows the viability of our service," Smart Wireless Consumer Division head Danilo J. Mojica said in a statement.

Smart Pinoy, the telco's OFW brand, supported the recently held "Kinabukasan, Kabuhayan, Tulong Namin" organized by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa) and the Manila Economic Cultural Office (Meco) in Taiwan.

Discussed during the two-day business forum were livelihood and investment opportunities. Many attendees expressed interest in becoming electronic load agents or setting up Smart Bro and Smart Padala centers under SEP.

"The recently concluded Business Forum in Taiwan is only the beginning of Meco and Owwa's partnership in reaching out to overseas Filipino workers on-site and preparing them for their eventual return to the Philippines," Owwa Administrator Marianito D. Roque said in a statement.

Antonio I. Basilio, Meco managing director and resident representative, said that they intend to provide the migrant worker an opportunity to generate a sustainable livelihood for himself and his family.

"We hope to lessen the risk by providing opportunities in proven business models such as those offered by Smart," Basilio said.

To illustrate the power of wireless broadband Internet, Smart surprised some OFWs during the demonstration of a video conference. Unknown to the OFWs, their loved ones had been contacted beforehand to attend a simultaneous briefing that culminated with the family member in the Philippines and the OFW in Taiwan seeing and talking to each other by way of video conference made possible by Smart Bro.

There are about 92,000 Filipinos working in Taiwan, with more than 60,000 based in the northern area, which includes Taipei and Taichung.

IT firm sees goldmine in Internet café screens

By Riza T. Olchondra

IRRITATED BY POP-UPS? HOW ABOUT A "permanent pop"?

An IT solutions provider has launched a new marketing platform called Isam or Intra-Synergy Ad Media, which places customizable advertisements and announcements in a bar at the bottom of the PC screen.

Developer e-Methods for Business Management Corp. (e-MBM) said in a media briefing that the platform was ideal for Internet cafés and small businesses because the location of certain messages could be customized. Thus, a Makati City-based small business may advertise only in surrounding Internet cafés using the Isam service.

e-MBM chair and CEO Garth Noel Tolentino said the target audience for such ads were Internet café users between 18 to 35 years old.

The cost per ad bar is P9 per screen per window per day, for a minimum exposure of 30 days. eMBM said the cost was very cheap in light of the potential benefits.

The company is targeting to reach 60,000 computer screens in various Internet cafés all over the country within the next two to three months from the present 10,000.

e-MBM's network of Internet cafés is limited to Metro Manila and suburbs and Northern Luzon at the moment, including Imus, Cavite; Valenzuela City; Malabon; Navotas; Bulacan; Vigan; Baguio City; Quezon City; Manila; Marikina City; Dagupan City and Las Piñas.

Interested Internet café operators may sign up with eMBM at www.embm.net or get information at www.isamph.com/forum.

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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Make sure the scanned price is right

'TIS THE SEASON FOR SHOPPING! Whether it is for new clothes and shoes and other fashion accessories, or for foods galore to fill the Noche Buena table, we will all troop to the stores and shops during this "shoppingest" time of the year. But wait! Make sure you're paying the right price for the goods you buy. After all, you worked hard the whole year for the money you'll be spending. Of course, the more your money can buy, the better. How can you make sure the price is right?

From groceries to barbecue grills, most everyday items bear a Universal Product Code (UPC). This symbol-a series of numbers and vertical bars of varying thickness-is shorthand for product information. When a cashier passes the UPC symbol over an electronic scanner, a computer decodes the symbol and sends the price to the cash register. The price appears on a display screen and on your printed receipt. Do these gadgets scan correctly? While scanner technology speeds up check-out time and results in fewer pricing errors compared to manual entries, electronic scanning is not foolproof. The reasons: human error, pricing difficulties and management problems. That's why sometimes there are inconsistencies between advertised or posted prices and prices stored in the computer, price inconsistencies on identical products, and price inaccuracies throughout a chain of stores because of an error in the central computer.

Although the UPC symbol has replaced the traditional readable price tag, it is still possible for consumers to spot pricing errors at the register. Here are some tips to make sure the scanned price is right:

- Watch the display screen for prices. If you think you're being overcharged, speak up. Ask the cashier to make the adjustment before you pay;
- Bring the store's flyer or newspaper ad to the check-out counter for reference on prices of sale items;
- Consider jotting down prices on the items as you put them in your shopping cart;
- Check your receipt before you leave the counter. If you notice an error, ask the cashier to adjust the total.

To pay for your purchases, use your ATM card from any BancNet member bank. You get to pay cash prices without having to carry bundles of cash. It's more convenient and secure. And you will be able to stretch your peso because you are entitled to the discounts that certain stores give to cash buyers. This BancNet electronic payment service is available in many shops and stores nationwide including the SM Group of Stores, Rustan's, Robinsons, National Bookstore, Shopwise, Waltermart and Gaisano. Lucky shoppers may even win a Toyota Innova in BancNet's ongoing "Shop, Swipe and Win" promotion that runs through December and will end on Feb. 18, 2007. Other prizes at stake are Philips 26" LCD flatscreen TVs, 30-GB iPod videos and Wow Magic Sing sets.

SM Supermarket awards outstanding business partners

SM SUPERMARKET RECENTLY awarded its outstanding trade partners in the 21st Golden Cart Award at the SM Mall of Asia's Centerstage Theater.

The awards, which highlight SM Supermarket's industry standards for excellent trade partner performance, recognize partners in different categories significant to its business.

These also coincide with SM Supermarket's 21st anniversary, and are a testimony to its market leadership, consistency, and staying power. Over the years, it has earned the trust and acceptance of its customers by bringing quality products and services through the years.

All nominees were meticulously screened and chosen, taking into consideration all departments and aspects of the retail business. This is based on the supplier's total performance the past year, with emphasis on business development, marketing support, replenishment and logistic support.

The Golden Cart is a seal of approval by the industry leader, and signifies each one's strong leadership with SM Supermarket. What makes the Golden Cart awards unique is that all contenders are the crème de la crème of the supermarket retail business and are winners in their own right.

Topping the list as most outstanding trade partners were Choice Harvest in the local category; San Miguel Foods in the national category; and Colgate Palmolive in the multinational category. Other business partners who brought home the Golden Cart include:

Best non-trade partner-Limcako; 2) Most efficient food concessionaire-Paotsin; 3) Best in account management-Blue Mountain; 4) Best innovations in technology-Delfi; 5) Best in delivery service-Johnson & Johnson PTE Ltd; 6) Best concession-San Miguel Foods (poultry division); 7) Outstanding merchandiser performance-Nestle Grocery; 8) Outstanding store relations-MGM; 9) Most improved overall customer service level-Unilever Foods; 10) Best overall customer service-JS Unitrade; 11) Best in store display-Monterrey Foods Corp; 12) Best internal advertising campaign-Unilever Philippines; 13) Best external advertising campaign-"First Day High" (Unilever Philippines); 14) Most improved supplier-Jim-K; 15) Best marketing relations-Joella Limjuco, San Miguel Foods poultry division; 16) Breakthrough product of the year-Eaji (San Miguel CKAG).

Regine Tolentino hosted the event, while celebrities like Geneva Cruz, Maureen Larrazabal and Sitti also graced the event. The Golden Cart Award is one of the many ways SM Supermarket synergizes with its suppliers.

Properties Expo to woo developers, OFWs

ALL ROADS LEAD TO THE MALL OF Asia in Pasay City in January as the real estate industry launches the Philippine Properties Exposition 2007, the largest annual gathering of real property developers.

As part of the celebration of the Philippine Properties Festival 2007, the exposition is aimed at maximizing the strong buying power of the local and overseas Filipino markets by bringing together property sellers and buyers under one roof in a four-day event.

The exposition, which will be held at the SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City from Jan. 25 to 28, will cater primarily to the growing market of overseas Filipino workers, who are now starting to invest heavily in real estate.

The event's organizers, led by the Creba Social Housing Foundation Inc (CSHFI), have forged agreements with relevant government agencies, like the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, the Department of Tourism, and the Department of Labor and Employment to help guide Filipinos working abroad on real estate opportunities in the country.

The CSHFI, the social responsibility arm of the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Association, has also tapped non-government organizations such as the Philippine Retirement Authority, the Philippine Association of Service Exporters Inc, and the Seafarers' Board.

"The aim of the exposition is to provide a venue for real property developers to market their projects to overseas Filipino workers. The industry recognizes the sacrifice of OFWs in working abroad with the goal of building their own homes in their native land," CSHFI chair Rose Basa said.

"The industry shares this vision with our OFWs-to give them the opportunity of owning their own homes through various socialized housing projects. The Philippine Properties Exposition 2007 is the perfect venue where they could meet with property developers and make their dreams come true," she added.

The exposition features 140 booths in two halls at the Mall of Asia where more than 100 real estate companies and those from related sectors will showcase their products.

Exposition organizers have lined up an exciting and innovative array of activities for the event. Aside from a comprehensive showcase of real estate development currently available in the market, industry leaders and experts will conduct lectures and seminars.

"Activities for the entire family will also be part of the exposition as 'home' and 'family' are two of the basic blessings aspired for by all Filipinos," Basa said.

"Participants should look forward to joining all activities, including livelihood seminars, shows featuring the country's top solo performers, and a band fest," she added.

For details and inquiries, call the Philippine Properties Festival 2007 secretariat at 864-0224, 819-2058 to 59, or (0919) 849-5648.

AYALA TAPS METROBANK FOR P2-B LOAN

Ayala Corp recently tapped Metropolitan Bank & Trust Company (Metrobank) for a P2-billion loan. The seven-year floating rate notes facility was arranged by First Metro Investment Corp. Shown are (from left) Ayala Corp's associate director Romualdo Katigbak and managing director lawyer Renato Marzan, First Metro Investment president Francisco Sebastian, Ayala Corp managing director and treasurer Ramon Opulencia, Metrobank chair Antonio Abacan Jr, Ayala Corp CFO and senior managing director Delfin Lazaro, Metrobank president Arthur Ty, Ayala Corp managing director Rufino Luis Manotok, Metrobank executive vice president Vicente Cuna Jr and senior vice president Jose Chan Jr, First Metro Investment vice president Stella Maria Piedad Torres, Metrobank vice president Edgar Esguerra and senior manager Franco Ramirez.

LRP FOUNDATION'S CHRISTMAS WITH HAPAG-ASA'S CHILDREN

The LRP Foundation, in coordination with Hapag-Asa and Metro Bakers (Dunkin Donut), celebrated its annual gift giving and feeding program to the Hapag-Asa Nutrition Program children of Paranaque City. The program was held Dec. 16 at the Our Lady of Peace Parish in Sucat, Parañaque City.

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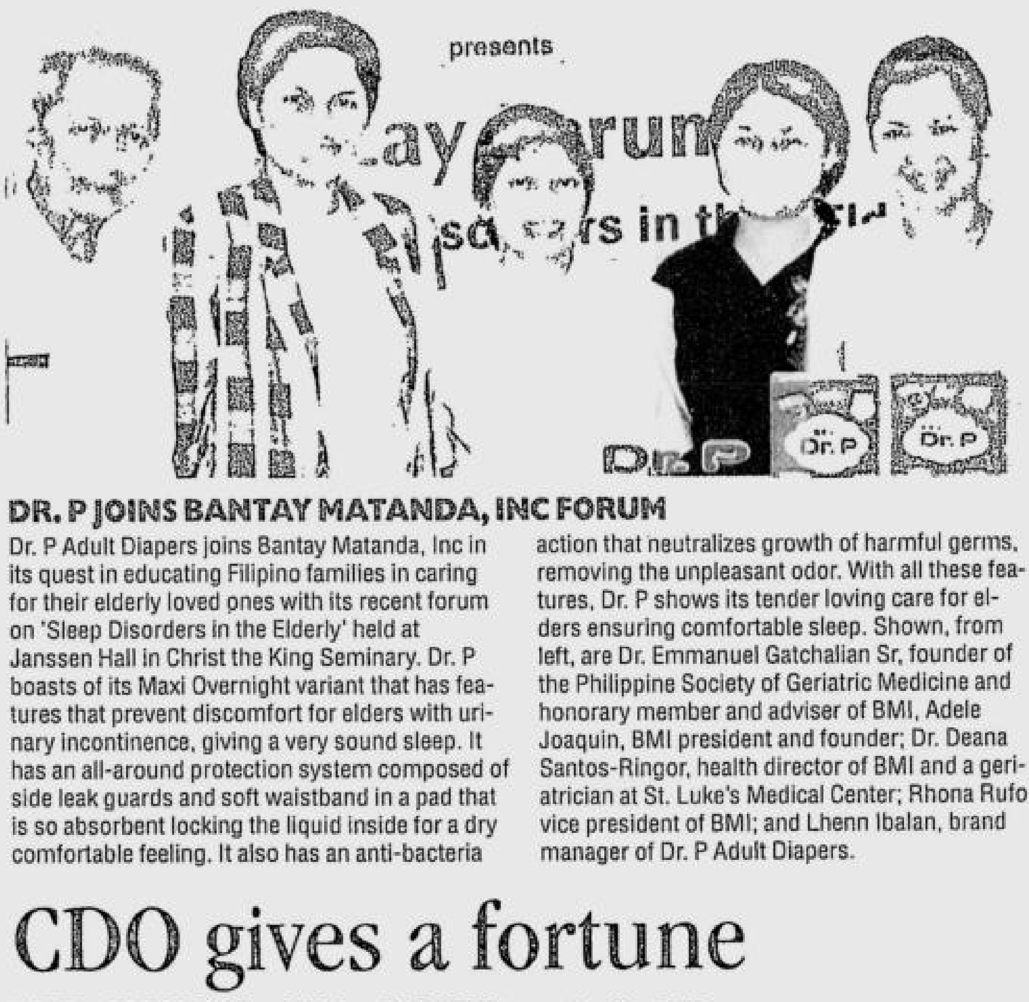
RP FRANCHISE HOLDER OF SECURE@PHONE INTERNATIONAL

The Philippines has closed ranks with other countries in the campaign to stop the growing mobile phone call theft problem. Secure@Phone International has recently signed a franchise agreement with Mark & Register Philippines to offer Secure@Phone service in the Philippines. The Philippines now joins a growing Secure@Phone International network that includes franchises in the United Kingdom, Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong, which will soon be joined by other countries in Asia as well as Africa. Shown at the signing of the franchise agreement are (seated, from left) Zally Rafallo, Hannibal Evangelista, treasurer and president, respectively, of Mark & Register Philippines, and Calvin Craig, president of Secure@Phone International who flew in from Hong Kong. Witnessing the signing are (standing, from left) Willy Ingles and lawyer Butch Placido, EVP and corporate secretary, respectively, of Mark & Register Philippines Inc. For more information, interested parties may log on to www.secureaphone.com.



DR. P JOINS BANTAY MATANDA, INC FORUM

Dr. P Adult Diapers joins Bantay Matanda, Inc in its quest in educating Filipino families in caring for their elderly loved ones with its recent forum on 'Sleep Disorders in the Elderly' held at Janssen Hall in Christ the King Seminary. Dr. P boasts of its Maxi Overnight variant that has features that prevent discomfort for elders with urinary incontinence, giving a very sound sleep. It has an all-around protection system composed of side leak guards and soft waistband in a pad that is so absorbent locking the liquid inside for a dry comfortable feeling. It also has an anti-bacteria action that neutralizes growth of harmful germs, removing the unpleasant odor. With all these features, Dr. P shows its tender loving care for elders ensuring comfortable sleep. Shown, from left, are Dr. Emmanuel Gatchalian Sr, founder of the Philippine Society of Geriatric Medicine and honorary member and adviser of BMI, Adele Joaquin, BMI president and founder; Dr. Deana Santos-Ringor, health director of BMI and a geriatrician at St. Luke's Medical Center; Rhona Rufo, vice president of BMI; and Lhenn Ibalan, brand manager of Dr. P Adult Diapers.

CDO gives a fortune

MEAT PROCESSING FIRM CDO-FOODsphere Inc is making the old adage "it is better to give than to receive" relevant this holiday season by giving gift buyers a chance to win a fortune.

Jonathan Bendicion, CDO senior marketing manager, said buyers of any of the Christmas Hams can win a brand new Toyota Fortuner and other exciting prizes such as five units of Nokia N90 cellular phones, five Apple 30G I-pods, and five NEC laptops.

In the CDO "Give a CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham, Win a Fortune!" promo, ham buyers can win any of these prizes by buying any of the following CDO products: CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham, CDO Pista Cooked Ham, CDO Pear-Shaped Ham, CDO American Ham and CDO Hamon de Bola.

Bendicion said that under the promo, buyers will have the chance to win a fortune by looking for the promo code that can be found on the box of any of the five products and by sending via text "CDO Code <promo code>" to 2727.

There should be only one code per text and that the same code cannot be sent more than once, Bendicion said.

Participants will also be asked to text CDO <Join / the name of the participant / age, gender / complete address> to 2727. Participants should cut the promo code portion including the ham box as proof of purchase.

All keywords must be sent to 2727. Each successful message sent costs P2.50 for Smart, Talk N Text, Addict Mobile, Globe, and Touch Mobile subscribers and P2 for Sun Cellular subscribers.

Bendicion said the promo period began Nov. 13 and will run until Jan. 9. Only valid entries sent on or before 11:59 p.m. of Jan. 9, 2007 will be included in the draw. The grand draw will be on Jan. 16.

All winners will be given a notification letter that they have won as well as the details on where to claim the prize. In claiming the prize, winners should present the following: valid identification, letter of notification, proof of purchase and SIM card used.

Bendicion said the promo is meant to share to the public the blessings that CDO-Foodsphere has received through the years through the loyalty of its consumers.

Phi Iota Tau celebrates 60th anniversary

THE PHI IOTA TAU FRATERNITY AND SORORITY, AN HONOR SOCIETY OF Feati University, invites all members and alumni to its 60th anniversary celebration on Feb. 14 at the Grand Ballroom of the Traders Hotel, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City. The organizing committee will be publishing a souvenir program which will include an updated directory of members. All Tauans are encouraged to update their contact information through any of the following: Ernesto Supetran at 671-7212/0917-6311064, Gilbert Magbutay at 682-7114/0920-9226441, or Jon del Rosario at 886-3187 local 391/0918-9296993. Updates and inquiries can also be e-mailed to gibma2003@yahoo.com or dyon223@yahoo.com.

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Ofloxacin boosts compliance

PASCUAL LABORATORIES RECENTLY launched its own brand of ofloxacin (Itex), a widely tested and clinically proven antibacterial agent. This brand is marketed at half the price of the originator brand in order to encourage treatment compliance among patients.

An enormous problem due to antibiotic-resistance has emerged over the years. This is mainly because of treatment non-compliance, a case where a patient does not complete the recommended course of antibiotic therapy.

This poses a problem because incomplete antibiotic therapy will cause some bacteria to survive in the body. The surviving bacteria will develop resistance to some form of antibiotics. When faced with this problem, the physician will have two choices-prescribe a higher dosage of the same antibiotic or switch to another antibiotic which has a broader spectrum and is more toxic. Either way, the patient is bound to spend more for his or her medicine.

There are a number of reasons that cause treatment non-compliance. Paramount among these reasons is the cost of the drug. Patients more often discontinue their medication because they cannot afford to sustain the treatment.

This economical pricing of the new ofloxacin will encourage full-dose compliance among patients, lessening the chances of antibiotic resistance and increasing the rate of successful therapeutic outcomes.

The introduction of a new ofloxacin brand is part of Pascual Laboratories' 60th celebration, wherein the company reaffirms its commitment to relentlessly pursue quality, innovation and excellence for the service of Filipino patients. Over the years, its product lines have rapidly expanded and evolved from medicines for the treatment of tuberculosis and vitamin deficiency, to more than 100 products with 300 presentations in various therapeutic classes. Ofloxacin (Itex) is the newest member of the company's long line of medicines which carries the Pascual Laboratories tradition of quality, innovation and excellence.

Ofloxacin is a prescription product. Patients are advised to seek a doctor's prescription before using the drug.

Support for liver patients

PROTEIN IS VITAL TO HUMAN LIFE. FOUND in every cell and tissue, proteins form the body's main structural elements-bones, muscles, skin, organs, blood, hormones and enzymes. Your body uses proteins for growth and repair.

However, your body can't directly use proteins derived from food. The proteins you ingest have to be broken down by digestive enzymes into shorter amino acid chains and finally into individual amino acids. The amino acids then enter the blood stream and make their way to wasted cells where they are incorporated into proteins the body needs.

High-protein diets are generally well tolerated by healthy adults, but not those suffering from liver disease because they lack the ability to get rid of the waste products of protein metabolism.

This is why patients suffering from cirrhosis and other chronic liver diseases often suffer from malnutrition. Cirrhosis refers to the formation of scars in the liver, which disrupts the liver's important functions. Cirrhosis occurs as a result of excessive alcohol intake, common viral hepatitis, obstruction of the bile ducts, and exposure to certain drugs or toxic substances. People with cirrhosis often experience loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and weight loss, making them look malnourished.

A study by Dr. Hisataka Moriwaki showed that as high as 65 to 90 percent of patients with cirrhosis suffer from protein-energy malnutrition (PEM), affecting their quality of life. A person suffering from PEM has low levels of albumin (visceral protein) and decreased skeletal muscle volume (muscular protein). In the treatment of cirrhosis, it is also important to diagnose and manage PEM.

Having frequent meals or late evening snacks is recommended to help deal with protein malnutrition. In many cases, supplementation with branched-chain amino acids (BCAA) is prescribed. But the timing of intake is important. Recent studies show that when taken at daytime, BCAA tend to be consumed by energy generation for physical exercise of skeletal muscles. Nighttime intake seems more favorable.

Aminoleban contains branched-chain amino acids (BCAA) and is known to be effective in helping address PEM among patients with cirrhosis. It is a preparation made up of amino acid, vitamins and minerals that offers a new pharmaco-nutritional approach for patients with liver impairment. A study found by Dr. Takafumi Ichida and his colleagues found that aminoleban prolongs the life span of patients with decompensated liver cirrhosis. Ninety-two percent of those who received Aminoleban were still alive at the end of six-month study period. The authors concluded that oral supplementation with a BCAA preparation administered for two years improves event-free survival, serum albumin concentration, and quality of life among patients with decompensated cirrhosis.

Overcoming stroke spasticity

AMONG THE MANY GRAVE COMPLICATIONS of a stroke, one of the most physically incapacitating is uncontrolled muscle tightness, otherwise called spasticity. The pain and limited movements brought about by this condition can make each day a constant struggle for the patient. Fortunately, a cutting-edge treatment called BoNT-A, also known as Dysport, is now available and is helping more Filipino stroke survivors-and their families-ease their lives.

BoNT-A or Dysport is a form of localized treatment that has been in use for the past 15 to 20 years. It is a local blocking agent, a medication that will deliberately impair transmission between nerve and muscles so that when the brain or the spinal cord sends these abnormal messages of contraction, these messages are no longer transmitted to the muscle, allowing it to loosen up and relax.

According to a recent study of the Stroke Society of the Philippines, a stroke or brain attack (which should be differentiated from a heart attack) occurs in 1.4 out of every 1,000 Filipinos above the age of 20. This condition is therefore not uncommon. For the fortunate ones who survive the attack, international and local studies show that between 30 to 70 percent will suffer spasticity.

A typical patient who has survived a stroke may in fact be observed with a peculiar posture in which the arm is very tight and often crunched up against the chest, with the fingers sometimes tightly clenched in a fist. The leg is very stiff, swinging sideways as the patient tries to walk. They might even be unable to place their foot flat on the floor.

The impact of spasticity is potentially enormous. If left untreated, it may cause contractions and permanent disfigurement. The psychological devastation accompanying the condition often causes depression and greatly impacts not only on the patient's but the entire family's quality of life. Releasing that over-activity in those muscles would surely produce a welcome sense of satisfaction and elation. The patient-and his or her family may enjoy unexpected, extraordinary benefits just by releasing the excessive tension in muscles.

The most important mainstay in the management of post-stroke spasticity is neurological rehabilitation, through a combination of physical and occupational therapy. Unfortunately, relying solely on a physical approach may provide a slow, painful treatment that may last months, even years, before significant recovery is achieved.

To facilitate movement, doctors may prescribe oral medications designed to loosen the muscles. A major issue with those treatments however, is their side effects, most commonly sleepiness, sedation or generalized weakness. Since oral agents are delivered throughout the entire body, it does not make much sense to give a pill that goes everywhere when spasticity may in fact be only in an arm or a leg.

This is one distinct advantage of BoNT-A treatment. Since it is administered exactly where it is needed, patients and their families need not be afraid of generalized side effects common with oral medications.

When combined with neurological rehabilitation, BoNT-A can provide a quicker and more dramatic improvement in patient movement, posture and gait, aside from relieving the severe pain associated with muscle spasms. Overall, it may help lift the psychological barrier that may impair a patient's will to recover-and deliver a better quality of life.

In fact, leading experts in BoNT-A research are now looking into treatment for spasticity, as soon as it appears, the concept being to arrest its onset even before the brain "memorizes" its as a "normal" condition-and makes it more difficult to manage.

Today, the Philippines enjoys the privilege of having specialists who have been well-trained and certified to administer BoNT-A in spasticity. BoNT-A Centers have been set up in Manila, Cebu, Iloilo, Bacolod, Davao, Cagayan de Oro, Palawan and in major cities all over Luzon. These centers cater not only to stroke survivors, but also to other patients whose spasticity was brought about by other causes, such as cerebral palsy, spinal or brain injury, and multiple sclerosis.

Those who would like to know the location of the nearest BoNT-A or Dysport Center, or wish to refer a friend or loved one may send a text message. Type <NAME><LOCATION><MESSAGE> and send it to 0917-9993655 or write to hopeforspasticity@gmail.com. Additional information may also be obtained at www.hopeforspasticity.org.

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In Loving Memory

on the Thirteenth Death Anniversary of

DOÑA JUANA VILLARICA MARTEL

January 27, 1898 – December 25, 1993

Masses will be offered for her **today, December 25, 2006**
at the following churches:

CHRIST THE KING PARISH *Green Meadows Avenue, Quezon City*	ALL MASS SCHEDULE
MARY THE QUEEN PARISH *Madison St., Greenhills, San Juan*	6:00 A.M.
REDEMPTORIST CHURCH *Baclaran, Parañaque City*	6:00 A.M.
SANCTUARIO DE SAN JOSE *Greenhills, Mandaluyong City*	6:15 A.M.
SHRINE OF MARY QUEEN OF PEACE *Our Lady of EDSA, Quezon City*	8:00 A.M.
ST. ALPHONSUS MARY DE LIGUORI CHURCH *Magallanes Village, Makati City*	11:00 A.M.
NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY *Sto. Domingo, Quezon City*	12:00 NN
MT. CARMEL SHRINE *Doña J. Rodriguez St., New Manila, Quezon City*	12:15 P.M.
ST. JOHN BOSCO PARISH *A. Arnaiz Ave. Cor. Amorsolo St., Makati City*	4:00 P.M.
SANCTUARIO DE SAN ANTONIO *McKinley Road, Forbes Park, Makati City*	4:30 P.M.
HARRISON PLAZA CHAPEL *2/F, Harrison Plaza Shopping City, Malate, Manila*	5:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M.
MINOR BASILICA OF THE BLACK NAZARENE *Quiapo, Manila*	5:00 P.M.
ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE PARISH *Kalayaan Avenue, Bel-Air II, Makati City*	5:00 P.M.
ST. FRANCIS PARISH CHURCH *Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City*	5:30 P.M.

Her children,

ENRIQUE

ANTONIO, JR. &
BELEN LOVINA TICZON

JOSE &
OLGA SEVERINO

CARLOS &
ETELKA JUNGSCHLAGER

RODOLFO &
ALITA TRINIDAD
ROMUALDEZ

RICARDO &
LETICIA
MATIAS (†)

Her Sister, ISABEL V. RAMOS
Nephews, Nieces, Grandchildren & Great Grandchildren request all pious readers to join them in prayer for the eternal repose of her soul.

DR. WIGBERTO PEÑAFLOR CLAVECILLA, SR.

Peacefully passed away in the Grace of our Lord on December 23, 2006
and joined our Creator and his wife, ***Adelina Pura Clavecilla.***

The family would like to request for prayers for the eternal repose of the souls of their parents.

Their children:
Norma and **Edgardo A. Garcia; Wigberto, Jr.** and **Carmencita de Borja; Roberto** and **Teresita Maliwat; Ronaldo** and **Teresa Galang; Winston** and **Milagros Lao.**

Their grandchildren and great-grandchildren:
Edith C. Garcia and **Rafael Ungson** and son, **Enrico; Elizabeth C. Garcia** and **Dr. Vincent de Guzman; Edgardo Garcia, Jr.,** and **Bernadette Elvira C. Garcia; Leticia de B. Clavecilla** and **Marcelo Labre** and children **Enrique** and **Natalia; W. Paulo** and **Jose Geronimo de B. Clavecilla; Ana Rebecca M. Clavecilla** and **Jon Eng; Michelle, Wigberto Florentino** and **Roberto M. Clavecilla, Jr.; Kim, Katherine,** and **Ronaldo G. Clavecilla, Jr.; Nina L. Clavecilla.**

His remains lie in state at the Christ the King Church, Green Meadows, Pasig City until December 29, 2006.

Interment will follow at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina on December 30, 2006 after the 9:00 am Mass at the Christ the King Church.

"Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies." **John 11:25**

Our Dearly Beloved

MARIO BUENO DULDULAO

Peacefully joined his Creator on Thursday, December 21, 2006
after living a full and memorable 44 years.

Through the love that he gave, joys and sorrows shared with him, he will forever be remembered and missed by - his wife, **Bing**; children, **Tristan, Paulo, Mac-mac** and **Princess**; sister, **Imelda**; brothers, **Naido, Dencio,** and **Eric**; brother-in-law, **Ponciano**; sisters-in-law, **Tong, Edythe, Girlie, Precy** and **Maria**; nephews and nieces, and other relatives and friends.

May we request the readers, especially those whose lives he had touched,
to join us in prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Cosmopolitan Funeral Parlor, Camos St., Davao City.
Interment will be on December 30, 2006 at 3:00 pm at the Manila Memorial Park.

"...absent
from the
body to be
present
with the
Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

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DEATH ANNIVERSARY REQUIEMS
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ELISA R. ENRIQUEZ

of Macabebe, Pampanga

Peacefully joined the Lord on
December 22, 2006 at the age of 96.

Her children **Romy & Lucy & Soseng**, her loving grandchildren **Lawrence & Ching, Pher**, great grandchild **Shai**, relatives & friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Lumbang Chapel, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat (inside Manila Memorial Park), Paranaque City.

Interment will be at Loyola
Memorial Park, Paranaque on
December 27, 2006 at 3:00 p.m.

Misa de Gallo

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

THE NINE-DAY FESTIVAL THAT started Dec. 16 and ended yesterday is celebrated only in the Philippines and nowhere else in the Catholic world. The festival is truly a unique Filipino tradition.

When Miguel Lopez de Legazpi came with his flotilla to colonize the Philippines, he carried two orders from Philip II: Look for gold and a return route across the Pacific. Legazpi eminently carried out those orders during his long stint as governor general.

The good friars came along for the ride to spread the Catholic faith to the islands. It is fortunate that they did. For when they came, Islam had already taken root in southwestern Mindanao.

The rest of the archipelago was evangelized in 40 years, a world record that stands to this day.

The friars introduced numerous religious customs, many of which were unique to the Philippines. One of those customs was the novena to prepare the faithful for the Great Event, the birth of Christ, or the Nativity, celebrated throughout the Catholic world on Christmas Day, Dec. 25.

The original idea was to say a Mass at dawn, followed by the novena. But most of the parishioners were rice farmers. Even earlier than daybreak, they would already be tending their fields in order to put in the most work before the sun got too hot.

So, the friars moved the schedule to four in the morning, when the cock crowed to rouse the faithful (there were no alarm clocks then). Thus the name "Misa de Gallo," the Mass of the Cock. This traditions remains to this day.

For nine straight chilly mornings, while the world is in slumber, Catholic churches in the Philippines light up to welcome the faithful, hear mass and pray the novena. For many, this is a heavy sacrifice to make. But, once inside the church, the parishioner feels instantly a kind of warmth which may be mystical more than anything else.

Then the Mass begins, amid a lot of singing, songs in veneration of the Virgin Mother, songs in veneration of the Lord. After the Mass and the novena, as one leaves the church, he is met by vendors selling rice cakes, cookies and hot drinks just right to take home for an early breakfast.

When I was growing up in Naga City long before World War II, my father would bring me to the Misa de Gallo. I fondly remember the golden light from so many candles warming the cold wind and driving away the dark.

Today, there is a variation of the Misa de Gallo. It is the "Simbang Gabi" (Evening Mass), which is said as early as seven in the evening in the cities. Abroad, the Misa de Gallo or the Simbang Gabi is introduced in parishes where Filipinos congregate. The tradition is something to be really proud of, as truly Filipino.

Merry Christmas all!

Gov't budget deficit expected to fall well below target in '07

Singapore investment bank upbeat on RP's prospects

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEVELOPMENT BANK OF Singapore (DBS) is optimistic that the Philippines will be able to beat its deficit-reduction target for 2007.

In a paper on the Philippine economy, the investment bank said the national government's budget deficit could only hit P58 billion next year—well below the official target of P63 billion.

The projection was anchored on the government's better-than-expected fiscal performance for January to November of 2006.

Fiscal authorities have set the official target of reducing the budget deficit to P125 billion for 2006. But as of end-November this year, the deficit stood at only P58.3 billion. The government now expects the full-year deficit to settle anywhere between P80 billion to P90 billion.

In 2005, the deficit reached P146.8 billion.

The lower-than-expected deficit in January to November this year is attributed to the tight spending, largely resulting from the reenactment of the 2005 national budget, and increase in the collection of non-tax revenues, which includes proceeds from privatization and dividends remitted by state-owned firms.

DBS' projection contradicts the forecasts of some analysts that the government may not meet its official targets for next because of the coming elections. Analysts believe that the political exercise this coming May will actually result in higher spending.

DBS said that while elections normally encourage higher spending, this is not always the case for the Philippines.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. earlier said concerns over possible overspending next year was unfounded. He said that a spending ban would be implemented a few months before the May elections.

The government's P63-billion deficit targeted for next year is equivalent to 0.9 percent of the country's estimated gross domestic product for 2007. Should the DBS be correct in assuming a deficit of only P58 billion, the deficit-to-GDP ratio would be slightly lower at only 0.8 percent.

DBS noted that the Philippine government has set its expenditure program for next year at P1.182 trillion. But the investment bank said that the budget Congress would eventually pass, usually turned out to be lower than the original proposal.

Should the DBS' forecast indeed happen, that the expenditure program would be slashed in the legislative process, then the deficit could be lower than the official target. This is assuming that the revenue collection goals have been achieved.

The government's revenue collection program for 2007 is set at P1.119 trillion.

DBS said the revenue target was reasonable, given the Philippines' economic growth and implementation of the VAT Reform law.

Sale of retired Napocor power plants readied

By Abigail L. Ho

TWELVE ENTITIES HAVE EXPRESSED interest in bidding for the 200-megawatt (MW) Manila thermal power plant in Ermita, Manila—one of National Power Corp.'s decommissioned assets that Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) will be auctioning off next year.

PSALM vice president for asset management and electricity trading Froilan Tampinco said Manila Thermal would be the "test case" for the privatization of Napocor's retired power plants.

The decommissioned plant would be placed on the auction block early next year, he said.

Tampinco said that based on the turnout of a bidders' forum in September, there was now a lot of interest in these decommissioned assets, which PSALM would be selling as scraps.

"We think the market is now ready for the decommissioned plants," he said.

Most of those that have expressed interest in bidding for Manila Thermal were steel suppliers—both big and small, he said. He, however, refused to identify the prospective bidders.

After suffering several failed auctions last year, PSALM is now preparing to rebid Napocor's retired power plants, with Manila Thermal on top of the list.

These assets, to be assessed based on their scrap value, also include the 225-MW Bataan thermal power plant in Limay; the 22.3-MW General Santos diesel power plant in South Cotabato; the 54-MW Cebu II diesel power plant in Toledo City, and the 108-MW Aplaya diesel power plant in Misamis Oriental.

PSALM conducted two auctions for the Bataan thermal plant in April and September last year, both were declared failures.

The auctions for the Cebu II and Manila plants, which were held in the first quarter of last year, also failed to attract bidders.

Omico, RHI ink deal on Tagaytay venture

MINING AND REAL Estate firm Omico Corp. said it had signed a joint venture agreement with the Gokongweis' Robinsons Homes Inc. for the development of the former's 9,372-square-meter property in Tagaytay.

Robinsons Homes will be the developer of the project while Omico is the landowner.

In a disclosure, Omico said the property would be developed into a high density residential subdivision consisting of five-story residential condominium buildings.

Sources said Robinsons decided to pursue a second project in Tagaytay following the success of its 4.4-hectare Bloomfields subdivision project also in Tagaytay.

Robinsons Homes is the housing development division of Robinsons Land Corp., the property arm of the Gokongwei group of companies.

Among the projects of Robinsons Homes are townhouse project Centennial Place in Quezon City, residential cluster in Dasmariñas, Cavite called Vineyard, shop house units at Robinsons Homes East in Antipolo, residential lots on San Jose Heights also in Antipolo, San Lorenzo Homes in Antipolo, residential lots at Robinsons Highlands in Davao City, its joint venture housing project with EEI Realty dubbed Grosvenor Place in Cavite, Robinsons Hillsborough Pointe in Cagayan de Oro, Forest Parkhomes in Pampanga, Southsquare Village in Cavite, San Jose Estates in Antipolo, middle-cost housing called Robinsons Residenza Milano in Batangas, Bloomfields Davao, and the three-story townhomes at Fernwood Parkhomes in Pampanga. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

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LIFESTYLE
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso** *Subsection Editor* **Lito B. Zulueta**
sms feedback: inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart) **or email us at** lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ◎ TUESDAY **FITNESS** ◎ WEDNESDAY **2BU** ◎ THURSDAY **FOOD** ◎ FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**

2006 in arts and design

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

What worked last year, what did not? Here's the thumbs-up/thumbs-down guide to the best and the worst of 2007

Compiled by Lito B. Zulueta

Old wine, new skin

It was a year of retrospectives, as National Artist Arturo Luz turned 80; José Tence Ruiz turned 50 with a show at the SM Art Center that summed up his achievements as a social-realist illustrator, an innovative sculptor and a pioneer performance artist; Eduardo Castrillo marked his 40th year as the dominant Filipino sculptor in two generations; Ramon Orlina marked 30 years as a full-time artist with a worldwide reputation for his brilliant glass sculptures; and even the Old Master, Fabian de la Rosa (1869-1938), got a retrospective from the University of the Philippines Museum.

The Ayala Museum organized a major retrospective of the print works of Sansó. The retrospectives were a wonderful display of art scholarship and research and of curatorial creativity. They introduced the artists to a new generation of art lovers. Their well-attended formal openings were nothing short of national celebrations; they showed how Filipinos continued to value art and revere artists.

Artists of the nation

Bencab and Abdulmari Imao were proclaimed the newest National Artists. Other Filipino artists, who otherwise could not be nominated for the honor because of citizenship issues, were given the Presidential Merit Medals by President Macapagal-Arroyo—Juvenal Sanso, Anita Magsaysay-Ho and Romeo Tabuena. Nena Saguil and Fernando Zobel were also given the presidential medal posthumously.

New art venues

New art galleries and centers continued to crop up beyond the predictable confines of the giant commercial malls. Perhaps the newest art address is Serendra at The Fort in Taguig. The commercial-residential development project houses several galleries such as 1/of, e Gallerie and Art Verite. Alternative art spaces continued to burgeon, such as Blueroom in Bangkal, Makati; Pinto in Antipolo; Boston in Cubao; and Ricco-Renzo and the other galleries at the LRI Plaza in Bel-Air, Makati. Even established galleries such as Duemila left the malls to try other venues. In this case, Duemila moved to 210 Loring Street in old Pasay City, following the example of the trend-setting Avellana Gallery, which had long pitched its tent on FB Harrison Street. Meanwhile, Rock Drilon's Mag:net expanded to Katipunan Avenue, and it has managed to stay "alternative" and "underground"—at least in spirit—despite its incredibly robust "above-ground" growth.

Abstractly yours

The year 2006 could be called the Year of Abstraction. Abstract artists were a powerful presence on the art scene, with no apologies. Edwin Wilwayco, a top abstract expressionist, got commissions for mural-size works from art collectors Renato Santos and Robert Bjorn Santos (not related). Wilwayco

also got invitations to show his works in Germany, France and the United States, where his works were snapped up, even by foreigners. Wilwayco had a group show with Pandy Aviado and Justin Nuyda, equally great abstractionists. Meanwhile, Norberto Carating had a sold-out show in Hong Kong, confirming his status as an audacious abstractionist with a growing international reputation—and clientele. Carlo Magno also sold well. Meanwhile, young artists such as Lindslee, Art Bermido and Wilfredo Offermaria did wonderful perorations of abstraction on their own. Even Lindslee was invited to show his works at the Alliance Française.

Digital art grows

The more exciting trends in the art world were technologically driven.

2006 IN ARTS/ C4

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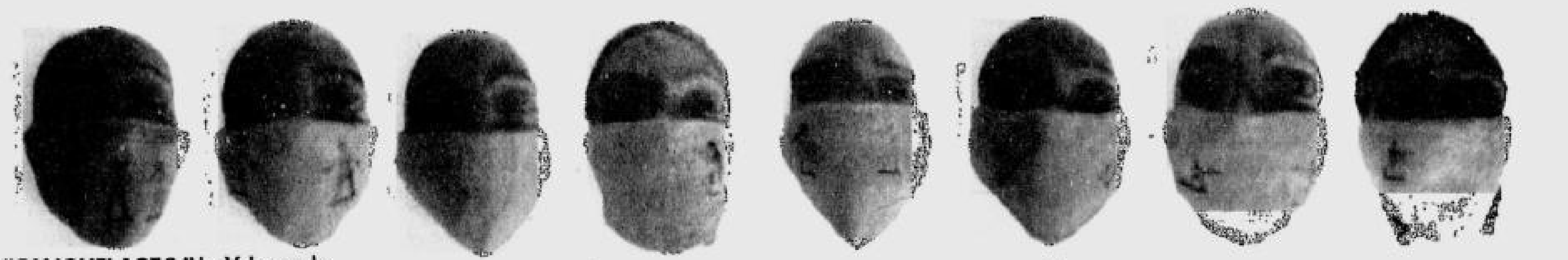


"CAMOUFLAGE 2," by Valenzuela

Stories from clay masks

A groundbreaking show explores concepts of identity and transformation

By Ian Rosales Casocot
Contributor

THERE IS A PASSAGE FROM BYRD Baylor's book "When Clay Sings" that appropriately summarizes things for the groundbreaking exhibit that opened recently at Mariyah Gallery along Larena Drive in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental.

The passage from the children's book goes this way: "They say that every piece of clay is a piece of someone's life. They even say it has its own small voice and sings in its own way."

That seems evident in the myriad stories that struggle to break free (and do) from the clay masks adorning the exhibition spaces of this pint-size gallery that has, of late, become the virtual melting pot of local visual arts.

In many ways, the whole show is a coming to form for most of the artists taking part in the exhibition, some of them formidable names constituting the very life of Oriental Negrense's art scene.

"Cara y Cruz" features works in terra cotta and, in one case, plaster by Kitty Taniguchi, Dani Sollesta, Hemrod Duran, Jutsze Pamate, Mark Valenzuela, Rene de Guzman and Cris Byro.

In works that vary widely in narrative and themes, the only commonality they have is their individual take on the concept of mask and mask-making. The challenge for each is to form out of clay their concepts of identity, which masks are particularly metaphoric for.

Serious and playful

"The idea of masks has always intrigued me," says Taniguchi. "Masks have been utilized throughout history to either hide or enhance our identities, sometimes in serious and sometimes in playful ways."

This take on the inherent contradictions of masks is at the heart of the exhibit. The Spanish term *cara y cruz*, of course, pertains to the old betting game involving the tossing of coins, but it is also an expression to suggest *baliktaran* or being *balimbing*, which is to say, changing one's behavior for one's advantage.

In "Cara y Cruz," the masks also play on the concepts of double identities—the masked and the unmasked personas in each one of us—as well as the ultimate goal of transformation which masking finally gives. This the artists say the ability of masks to render to the wearer a chance "to go beyond one's real self."

Most of the works are of San Carlos clay, which when finally baked produces a strong, full texture that can seem almost wooden. That texture helps in setting the tone and the theme of the masks—there is an earthiness to the works that makes them both intimate and off-putting at the same time.

East and West

In "Gargoyles," Taniguchi sets off the difference between a Venetian ball mask and a traditional Japanese mask, which somehow completes a wider story about East versus West. Here, she is deliberate in her message about intricate contrasts somehow still mirroring each other, and at the same time also devouring each other.

One mask is resplendent in its baroque intricacies—bulbous eyes set off by a pair of beaded eyebrows, and curlicues that become goat horns; this is versus a smaller mask, set beneath the first, that is Zen-like in simplicity.

In "Uwak," Taniguchi combines an old Babylonian aesthetic with something more native. Here, she takes on the mien of birds, with a mouthless mask featuring a protruded beak and angry eyes.

She has created a work that rejoices not in the flightiness of feathered creature, but in their ferocity. It is an angry work, also haunting, that nevertheless moves forward Taniguchi's current fascination with crows that populates her more popular paintings.

Sollesta, on the other hand, makes a virtual map of his travels by "compiling" in a grid-like manner his impressions of the countries (and the people) he has visited and encountered, rendering them all as different masks—some quaint, some horrific, some lovely—in an outsized work he titles "Images of Travel." The work is a masterpiece of visual art narrative.

Our autobiographies

The works by the other artists are equally compelling. Valenzuela's "Camouflage" 1 and "Camouflage" 2 are perhaps the most unsettling, and thus may be closest to aesthetic success.

Terra cotta is where Valenzuela has finally come to finding his mature artistic voice. A young artist known primarily for his conceptual paintings and sketches, he has found a fullness of tone and theme in his sculptural works. (In a future collection, he will be tackling dolls in terra cotta, rendering them monstrous and disjointed in what could be a critique of a mechanized and cosmeticized world.)

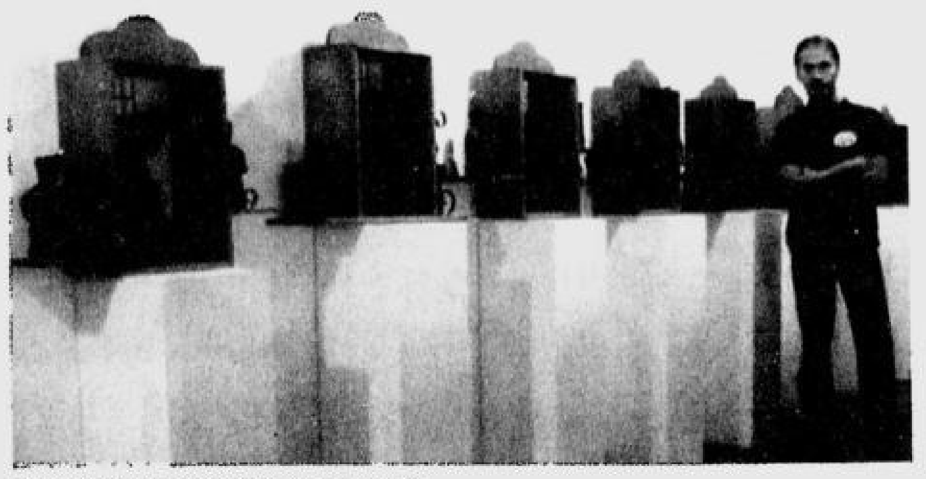
In "Camouflage" 1, he lines up in vertical order a series of cut-up faces, some with only eyes darting out stares of accusation, and some with mere mouths all the more disturbing because they leer with stuck-out tongues. The whole work is an elongated parade of Frankenstein face parts.

What story does it tell? A commentary on societal schizophrenia? Or the murderous and deceitful multiplicity of our everyday masks? Who knows?

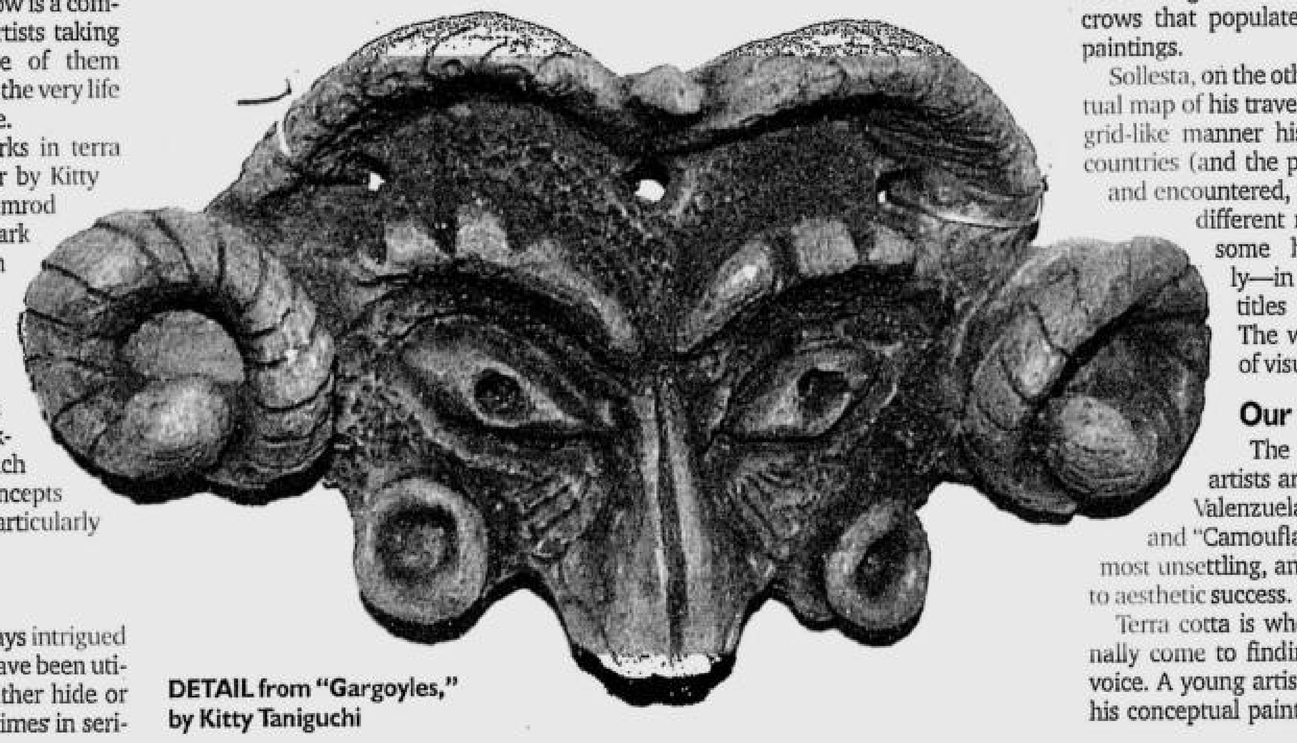
Because, in the long run, staring right into the clay eyes of each work, they frighten you with this possibility: that these masks can also be our own autobiographies.

We look at them "looking out" at us, and then we can easily imagine slipping them over our faces, becoming whatever common monster—or saint—we wish to be for the moment. Masks, after all, are all about "becoming."

The exhibit runs until January 2007 at Mariyah Gallery, Larena Drive, Bogo Junction, Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental. E-mail cristina_taniguchi@yahoo.com, or call 0921-3400686 or (035) 225-1687.



MARK Valenzuela with "War Games"



DETAIL from "Gargoyles," by Kitty Taniguchi

Deeply personal yet socially engaging

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

THE ART OF MARK OROZCO Justiniani reveals the paradoxical view of the artist vis-à-vis life and art, the two intertwining elements that have propelled his work to creative peaks. Though based for many years now in the United States, where he plunged himself to taking an active part in the mass actions of multiethnic groups in California, Justiniani remains true to his goal of exploring art as a springboard for responding to contemporary sociopolitical issues.

Having begun in the '90s as a member of Grupong Salingpusa, he has taken a fiercely loyal stance in the art of the espousal, a postmodern disciple of Social Realism that lends itself to the rigorous examination of the artist's role in society. Foremost of these concerns is the question of identity, which seeks to shed light on our history and culture, and how these forces have shaped our memory as a people.

Titled "Varying Constants," the opening show of the newest gallery in Metro Manila, Art Verite, at Serendra Mall in Bonifacio Global City, is a merry mix of Justiniani's work—past and present, personal and social, real and illusory, folk and modern. Many of these works have been lent by collectors, such as gallery owners and fellow artists.

Theme of diaspora

In fact, without labeling it as such, the show is closer in spirit to a retrospective, since many of the works date back to the early '90s.

A few recent works, like "Manhattan Project," explore more of the here and now, as well as those closer to home, such as the theme of diaspora, with no less than the late expat writer Carlos Bulosan, with parts of his literary work forming his visage, in the manner of computer pixels in the "Truman Show" poster.

Of more recent vintage are the artist's attempts at word play, an examination of how words can be so powerfully suggestive as to take over the image itself. These are evident in his experiments in scratchboard and mirror, with allusions to Biblical passages and iconographic treatment of font types, similar to that of the art of *letras y figuras*.

But to his avid collectors, the classic, timeless Justinianis are those done in the mid- to late-'90s period: those done in collaboration with his ex-wife Karen Flores, satire-rich murals on the Pinoy's folk religiosity, and his illustrated storybook narratives.

These, to me, are the best specimen of his creative peak, when the palette was at its most intense, insight at its most penetrating, satire at its most biting.

This is not, of course, to disparage the artist from continually exploring the oft-beaten track, so to speak, as many of our woes as a people keep recurring, like a bad dream, and we invariably find ourselves facing the same demons in this post-postcolonial milieu.

That must be what precisely the artist is saying in the title, and with all biting irony in his play of mirrors, words, the past is a ghost, returning to the present to haunt us from our slumber.

Testament of faith

The work of William Cadag, a well-meaning portraitist who has ventured into history via his church paintings, strikes me as solid proof of our endearment with culture and religious tradition. He has just ended his show, "The Old Church," in 828 Gallery at Art Plaza, Shangri-La Mall.

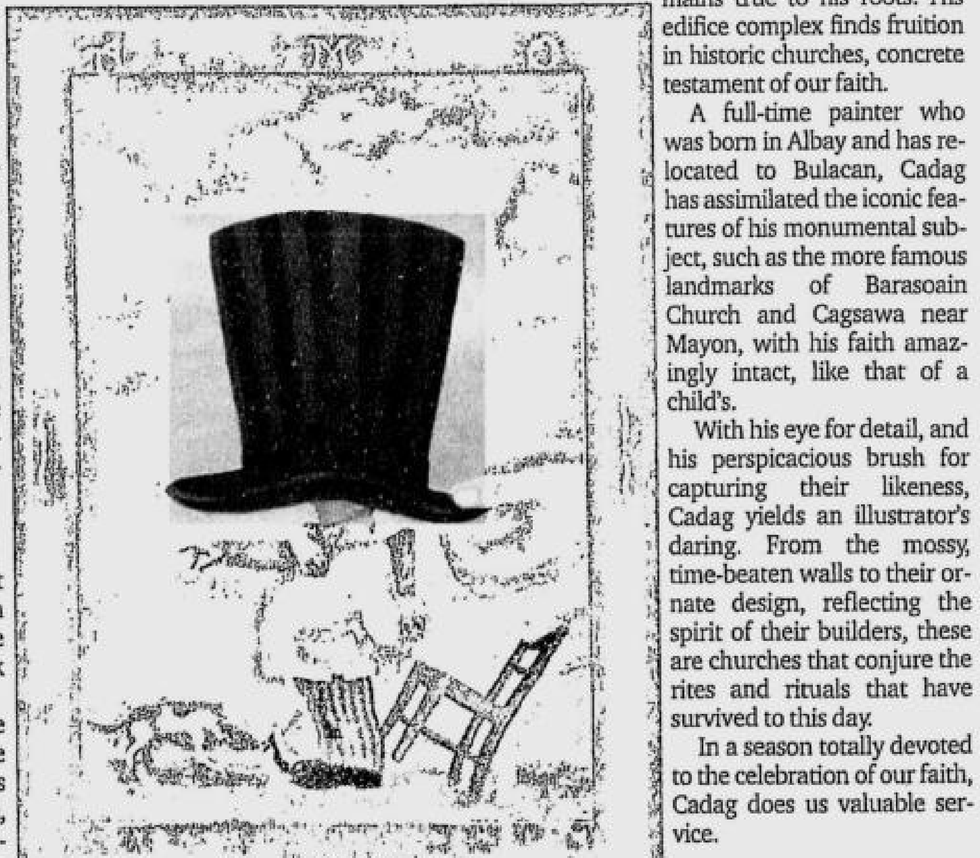
With a long list of artists visibly enamored with the subject, Cadag remains true to his roots. His edifice complex finds fruition in historic churches, concrete testament of our faith.

A full-time painter who was born in Albay and has relocated to Bulacan, Cadag has assimilated the iconic features of his monumental subject, such as the more famous landmarks of Barasoain Church and Cagsawa near Mayon, with his faith amazingly intact, like that of a child's.

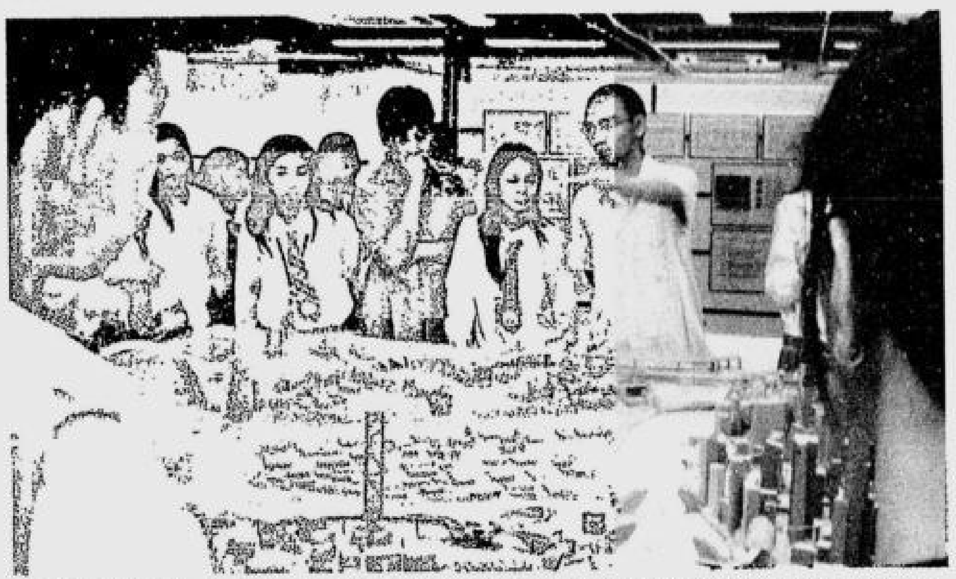
With his eye for detail, and his perspicacious brush for capturing their likeness, Cadag yields an illustrator's daring. From the mossy, time-beaten walls to their ornate design, reflecting the spirit of their builders, these are churches that conjure the rites and rituals that have survived to this day.

In a season totally devoted to the celebration of our faith, Cadag does us valuable service.

E-mail author at gdormiendo@yahoo.com



"AMO," by Mark Justiniani



HIGH-SCHOOL students from St. Therese School observe Manila's futuristic model in the "Utopian Manila" exhibit at Feati University, while College of Architecture faculty member, architect Walther Ocampo, discusses the replica.

Architecture school features 'Utopian Manila'

DOUBLE-DECKED TRAINS, SPIRAL buildings, drawbridges and an arch-shaped lighthouse are among architectural works which amazed viewers of the "Utopian Manila" exhibit at Feati University's corporate lobby recently. The show was part of the school's celebration of the Nationwide Architecture Week.

The futuristic scale model of Manila, intended as a class requirement initially, is an integrated project of the College of Architecture's students and faculty members.

The 5.76-sq m cardboard replica includes a skyscraper-filled Malate; an agrarian Intramuros (without the golf course); and a rehabilitated Pasig River and Coastal Road.

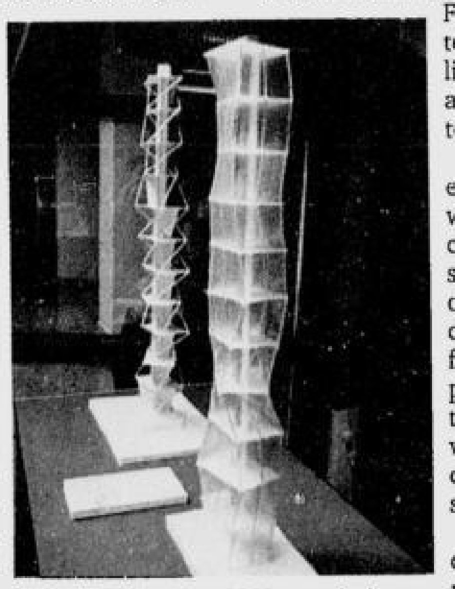
Complementing Manila's miniature are a montage inspired by the song "Manila" by the popular 1970s rock band Hotdogs, a digital presentation of construction procedures, and three-dimensional models of architectural structures.

On the first day of the event, participants learned more about Filipinos' concept of architecture through lectures on "How Muslim Filipinos Use Space" by Abraham Sakili; "Contemporary Filipino Architecture" by architect Rosario Encarnacion; "Art and Science of Architecture and Structures" by Bronne Dytoc; and "The Contemporary Architecture of China as a Lesson for Filipino Architecture Students" by the university's College of Fine Arts dean, architect Joycelyn Mananghaya.

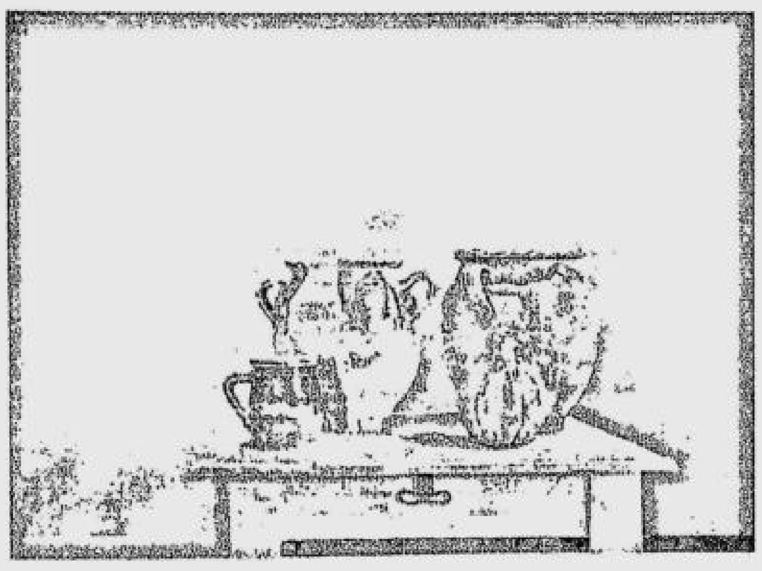
A staunch purveyor of local architecture, Feati's College of Architecture last year highlighted Ivatan houses and indigenous architectural material.

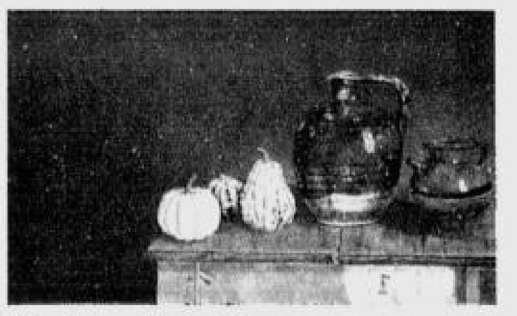
"The need, experiences and tradition by which indigenous architecture evolve are significant to the development of the field because they are the foundation of contemporary Filipino architecture," Mananghaya, who is also a heritage conservation architect, said.

Feati College of Architecture students and professors facilitated workshops for the senior students of S.G. Calderon Integrated School, St. Therese School and Manuel L. Quezon High School. The participants were given an overview of architecture and made scale models of tall buildings.

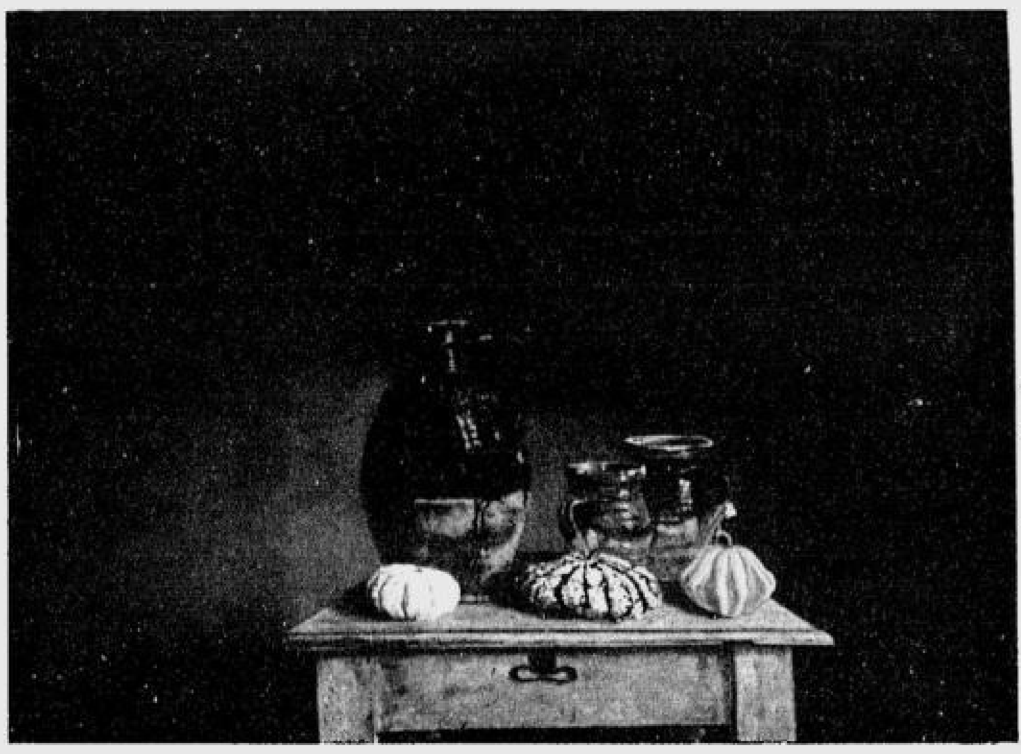


THREE-DIMENSIONAL translations of the study of morphology





Ostensibly European in inspiration and motif, the pieces still show traces of the Asian



Ofelia Gelvezon-Tequi's delicate tone poems

By Constantino C. Tejero

OFELIA GELVEZON-TEQUI IS ONE artist of the Filipino diaspora who hasn't really left her homeland behind. Despite decades of living abroad, she continues to incorporate in her art traces of her origin.

Tequi is from Iloilo. She studied art at the Pratt Institute in New York, and became noted as a printmaker. She won the top prize at the annual exhibition of the Printmakers Association of the Philippines, and the gold medal for printmaking at the Art Association of the Philippines competition.

She had been living in Paris since the 1970s until she recently moved to Limeuil in the countryside. Yet her Filipino-ness is such that she never fails to mount homecoming exhibits, usually two in a year, often with alternating themes and mediums.

One show is of innovative prints depicting the sociopolitical situation in the Philippines. This is preceded or followed by an exhibit of serene paintings of still life.

During the Estrada administration, she presented color etchings on zinc plate depicting the social unrest, political excesses and the grinding poverty of her *kababayan*, coupled with a suite of monochromatic seascapes.

A month earlier she mounted an exhibit of pieces in acrylic with a strong Oriental flavor, a series of still lifes of chinaware and tropical foliage.

Now, in a kind of visual and thematic continuity, the artist has come up with eight paintings of gourds and earthen vessels in "Still," until Dec. 30 in Hiraya Gallery, 530 United Nations Ave., Ermita, Manila.

The images are invariably of the same objects rearranged or seen from different angles, and invariably rendered in an rich color tonality. It is a subtle interplay of warm and cool harmonies, of muted colors and vibrant hues—the background a wall of fog-gray, charcoal-gray or slate-blue, and the foreground objects in red, yellow, orange, green, ochre, tannish brown.

The gleam on the skin of a red gourd, the stripes and wrinkles on another, the cracks and grain of the wood of the kitchen table, the sheen on the celadon—all are delicately captured by Tequi's mastery of light, color, texture and line. But it's a kind of realism that looks so much richer than mere copy.

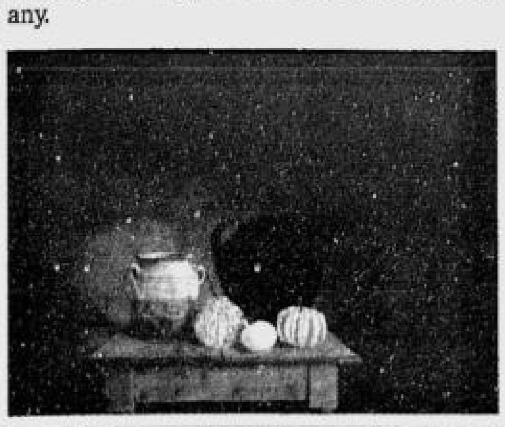
An exhibition note says that in these still lifes of urns and ceramic vessels with gourds on a plain wooden table the artist follows a northern European tradition that began in Flanders and the Netherlands.

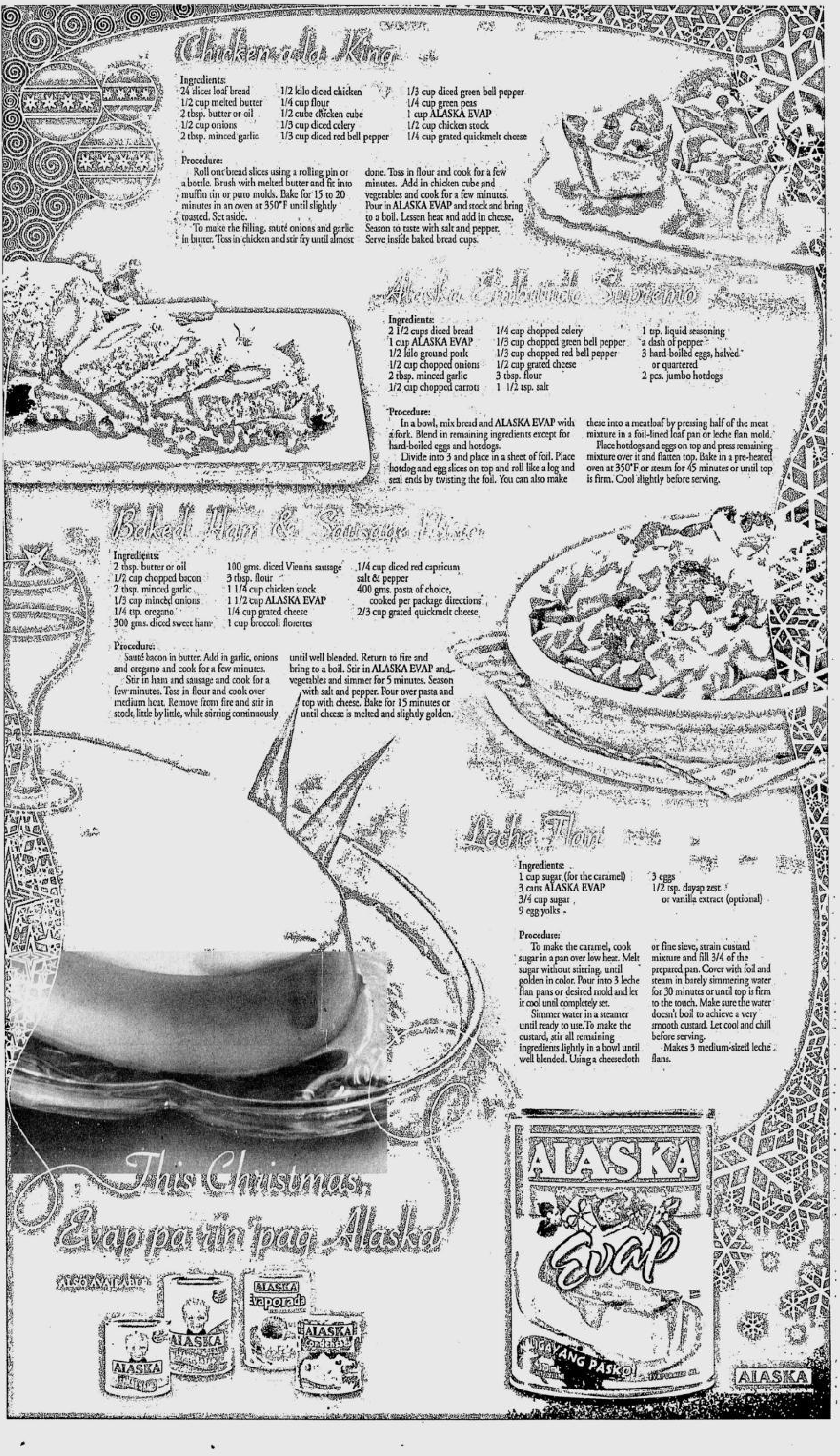
Here, it says, she "juxtaposes well-worn ceramic containers used for centuries to preserve walnut oil and food in the Perigord region, with the colorful but inedible gourds that come out at the end of summer and early autumn (yet another reminder of the passage of time)—the ephemeral with the lasting, the natural with the manmade."

The note also describes these still lifes as related to the vanitas, those paintings that "remind us of the transience of life, the futility of pleasure and the certainty of death." But each piece really looks more like a tone poem rather than a visual injunction, a haiku instead of a sermon.

Ostensibly European in inspiration and motif, the pieces still show traces of the Asian in the artist. The imagery is referencing the still lifes of Zurbarán and displays the formalism one finds in the work of Mu Ch'i.

The themes of seasonal change and the fragility of things, of course, are as Oriental as any.





Chicken a la King

Ingredients:
24 slices loaf bread
1/2 cup melted butter
2 tbsp. butter or oil
1/2 cup onions
2 tbsp. minced garlic
1/2 kilo diced chicken
1/4 cup flour
1/2 cube chicken cube
1/3 cup diced celery
1/3 cup diced red bell pepper
1/3 cup diced green bell pepper
1/4 cup green peas
1 cup ALASKA EVAP
1/2 cup chicken stock
1/4 cup grated quickmelt cheese

Procedure:
Roll out bread slices using a rolling pin or a bottle. Brush with melted butter and fit into muffin tin or puto molds. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes in an oven at 350°F until slightly toasted. Set aside.
To make the filling, sauté onions and garlic in butter. Toss in chicken and stir fry until almost done. Toss in flour and cook for a few minutes. Add in chicken cube and vegetables and cook for a few minutes. Pour in ALASKA EVAP and stock and bring to a boil. Lessen heat and add in cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve inside baked bread cups.

Alaska Embutido Supremo

Ingredients:
2 1/2 cups diced bread
1 cup ALASKA EVAP
1/2 kilo ground pork
1/2 cup chopped onions
2 tbsp. minced garlic
1/2 cup chopped carrots
1/4 cup chopped celery
1/3 cup chopped green bell pepper
1/3 cup chopped red bell pepper
1/2 cup grated cheese
3 tbsp. flour
1 1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. liquid seasoning
a dash of pepper
3 hard-boiled eggs, halved or quartered
2 pcs. jumbo hotdogs

Procedure:
In a bowl, mix bread and ALASKA EVAP with a fork. Blend in remaining ingredients except for hard-boiled eggs and hotdogs.
Divide into 3 and place in a sheet of foil. Place hotdog and egg slices on top and roll like a log and seal ends by twisting the foil. You can also make these into a meatloaf by pressing half of the meat mixture in a foil-lined loaf pan or leche flan mold.
Place hotdogs and eggs on top and press remaining mixture over it and flatten top. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 350°F or steam for 45 minutes or until top is firm. Cool slightly before serving.

Baked Ham & Sausage [illegible]

Ingredients:
2 tbsp. butter or oil
1/2 cup chopped bacon
2 tbsp. minced garlic
1/3 cup minced onions
1/4 tsp. oregano
300 gms. diced sweet ham
100 gms. diced Vienna sausage
3 tbsp. flour
1 1/4 cup chicken stock
1 1/2 cup ALASKA EVAP
1/4 cup grated cheese
1 cup broccoli florettes
1/4 cup diced red capsicum
salt & pepper
400 gms. pasta of choice, cooked per package directions
2/3 cup grated quickmelt cheese

Procedure:
Sauté bacon in butter. Add in garlic, onions and oregano and cook for a few minutes.
Stir in ham and sausage and cook for a few minutes. Toss in flour and cook over medium heat. Remove from fire and stir in stock, little by little, while stirring continuously until well blended. Return to fire and bring to a boil. Stir in ALASKA EVAP and vegetables and simmer for 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Pour over pasta and top with cheese. Bake for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted and slightly golden.

Leche Flan

Ingredients:
1 cup sugar (for the caramel)
3 cans ALASKA EVAP
3/4 cup sugar
9 egg yolks
3 eggs
1/2 tsp. dayap zest or vanilla extract (optional)

Procedure:
To make the caramel, cook sugar in a pan over low heat. Melt sugar without stirring, until golden in color. Pour into 3 leche flan pans or desired mold and let it cool until completely set.
Simmer water in a steamer until ready to use. To make the custard, stir all remaining ingredients lightly in a bowl until well blended. Using a cheesecloth or fine sieve, strain custard mixture and fill 3/4 of the prepared pan. Cover with foil and steam in barely simmering water for 30 minutes or until top is firm to the touch. Make sure the water doesn't boil to achieve a very smooth custard. Let cool and chill before serving.
Makes 3 medium-sized leche flans.

2006 in arts and design

From page C1

Young artists continued to explore and innovate digital art. University of Santo Tomas-based artists such as Wesley Valenzuela, Jaime Pacena and Buen Calubayan did wonders with digital manipulation. Even the most fervent painters and abstractionists had a background in digital art, such as Jep Belen, a 3D and visual-effects artist, who has a show of mixed-media works running at Le Soufflé at the Top of the Citi in Makati. Older artists such as Bencab and José Tence Ruiz have given the imprimatur on the exciting art form.

Art in hotels

New and renovated hotels seem to invest in Philippine art anew. The Sofitel Philippine Plaza renovated its lobby by putting up large works by Tito Estrada. But perhaps the most gung-ho about art is the gorgeous Hyatt Casino Hotel, which has works by Impy Pilapil and Ann Pamintuan. Pilapil's powerful marble sculptures also graced the Top of the Tower at the Philamlife Tower on Paseo de Roxas in Makati.

Great buys, stiff prices

Philippine works continued to get big biddings in the bi-annual auctions of Southeast Asian works by Sotheby's and Christie's. Relatively young artists such as Carlo Magno, Mark Justiniani, Marcel Antonio, Geraldine Javier and José Santos III were included in the auctions, more than signaling that they had come of age. The downside to this would be the impact on the art market: Would it create distortions in the pricing, for instance? We will soon find out.

National Artist for retail fashionistas

Fashion design was included in the National Artist Awards and Ramon Valera received it posthumously. Valera truly deserved to be recognized for his design, but there were reservations about putting up a National Artist Award for fashion design just to honor him. After all, including the award means it has to be given from now on to other designers, who may not be as deserving as Valera. And is fashion design really an art along the line of the other classical arts?

Fashion design was classified under Architecture and the Allied Arts. But during the deliberations, the Architecture and Fashion Design were two separate disciplines with their own separate proponents. In contrast, the other categories had only one set of proponents.

For example, while Literature had two nominees—poet Cirilo Bautista and critic-dramatist Bienvenido Lumbera—they were defended by only one set of proponents even if the disciplines of the nominees were practically separate—poetry and drama-cum-literary criticism. True enough, when the final voting was made, Lumbera won at the cost of Bautista. In contrast, both Valera and Ildefonso Santos (for Architecture) became National Artists.

Many expressed surprise at the powerful lobby to have fashion design included in the awards. The lobby impressed upon the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Cultural Center of the Philippines that fashion design in the West is considered an art form, as shown by the retrospectives given to YSL, Chanel and Dior by venerable institutions such as the Met of New York and the Louvre of Paris.

But, to be sure, those retrospectives were industry-driven. Shouldn't art be insulated from the influence of the market? And even if the National Artist Awards were really there to help an industry, say, the National Artist for Literature as a form of support for the creative industries such as publishing, was it really wise to give a National Artist Award to fashion design? What industry would such an award support?

To be sure, there's no fashion industry in the Philippines. That seems pretty obvious judging by the failure of fashion denizens to organize a regular fashion season in Manila.

The Philippines does not have a fashion industry; what it has is a fashion *retail* industry. The overwhelming world of retail means the Philippines is a subcontractor and source of cheap labor for the manufacture here of designs from the West.

What about Pinoy RTW brands? There's nothing remotely Filipino about Pinoy RTW because its designs are rehashed or knocked off from the West. And they get produced in the factories of China, which is the immediate beneficiary of the Philippine fashion retail industry.

The only uniquely Filipino contribution to fashion is marketing (see those giant billboards on Edsa?) and cheap services, as reflected in the sales attendants who could hardly tell you anything intelligent or of help about fashion because they are too poorly paid to bother learning about the stuff they're supposed to sell.

(More next week.)

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ARANETA Gen. Aguinaldo Ave. corner Gen. McArthur Ave., Araneta Center ◆ **ANTIPOLO** M. L. Quezon Corner Circumferential Road, Brgy. San Roque ◆ **MANILA** Harrison Plaza Mall, A. Mabini and M. Adriatico Streets, Malate, Manila

VISUAL ARTS

Tan at Domicillo

Domicillo (Unit 6, Cliffhouse, Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo Highway, Maharlika East, Tagaytay City) presents the solo exhibit of new collages by Gerardo Tan. "Collages" opens today and runs until Jan. 20. In the collages, Tan integrates images from exhibit invitations, posters and art magazines into complex interplays between abstract and recognizable elements, painted and printed matters, geometric and amorphous shapes, flat and illusory space. Call (046) 4132093.

Pamintuan at Hyatt

Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila presents "A Gilded Christmas at Hyatt," an exhibit featuring glass and metal Christmas trees created by artist Ann Pamintuan. The exhibit will benefit the Make-a-Wish and Kythe Foundation. Call 2451234.

Enriquez at Finale

In "Oils," on view at the Finale Art File (4/F LaO Center, Pasay Road cor. Makati Ave., Makati) until Jan. 15, 2007, Francesca Enriquez portrays and pays homage to the life of the city: frenetic, gloriously messy, crammed with various odds and ends. She delights in things—ordinary or otherwise—zeroing in on contemporary space, or the lack of it, in which private life negotiates and endures with its burden of accumulations. Exhilarating and exhaustive, each work can be viewed from the canvas' four sides. Call 8132310 or 8125034.

LIFESTYLE

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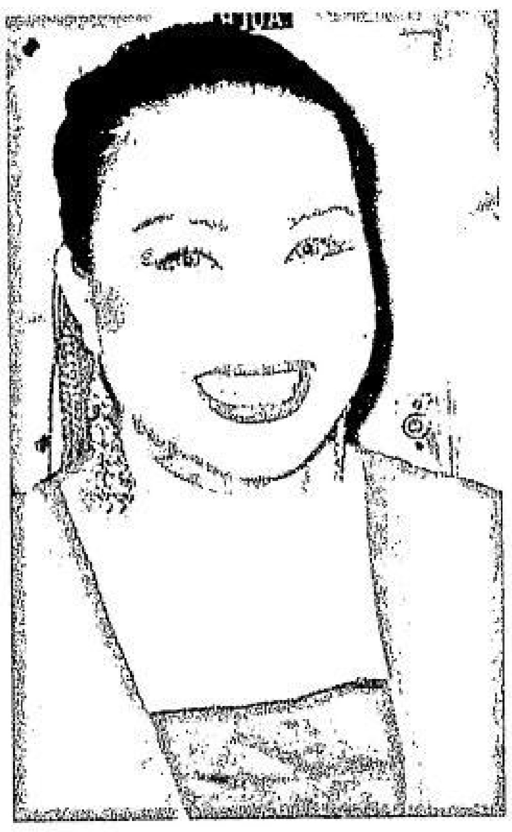

When Dulce dreamed her dream

Dulce's humble roots probably prepared her for greatness. Though she had no voice teacher, life was her best teacher

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

SATURDAY NIGHT AT PHILamlife Theater in her guest appearance with the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra, Dulce shared the standing ovation with tenor Otoniel Gonzaga, who ended the concert with a stirring version

WHEN/ D4

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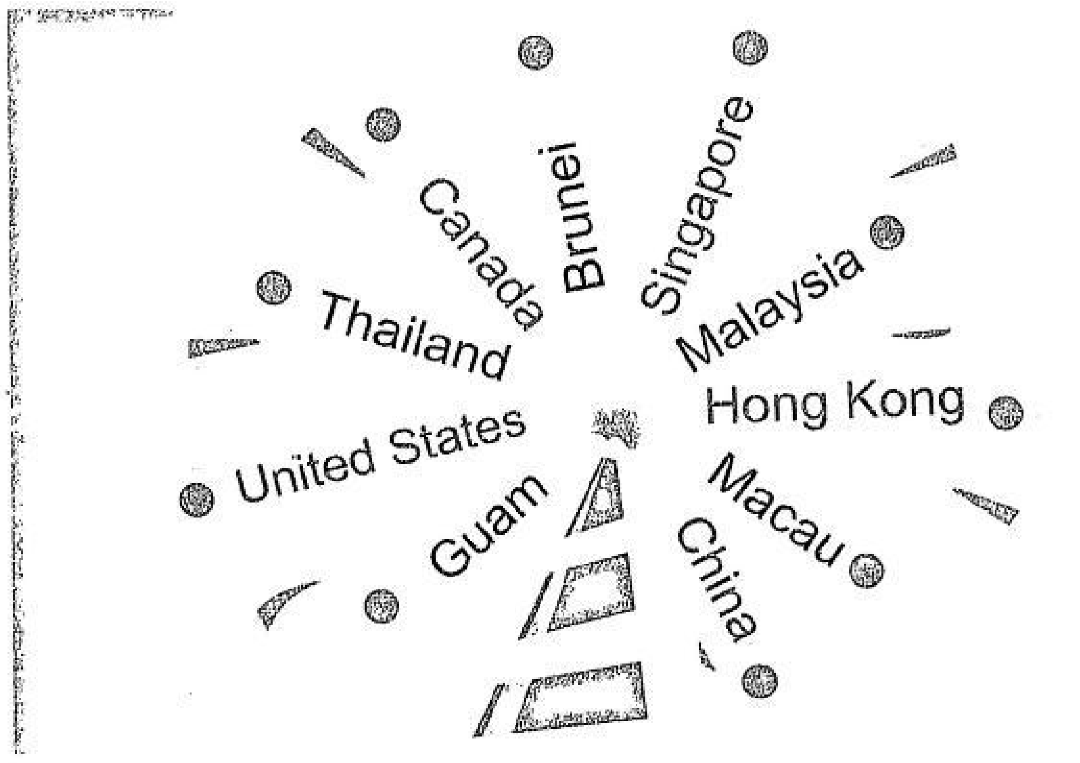
MERRY CHRISTMAS
and a
HAPPY NEW YEAR
FROM
starmall EDSA-SHAW
METROPOLIS ALABANG
starmall LAS PIÑAS



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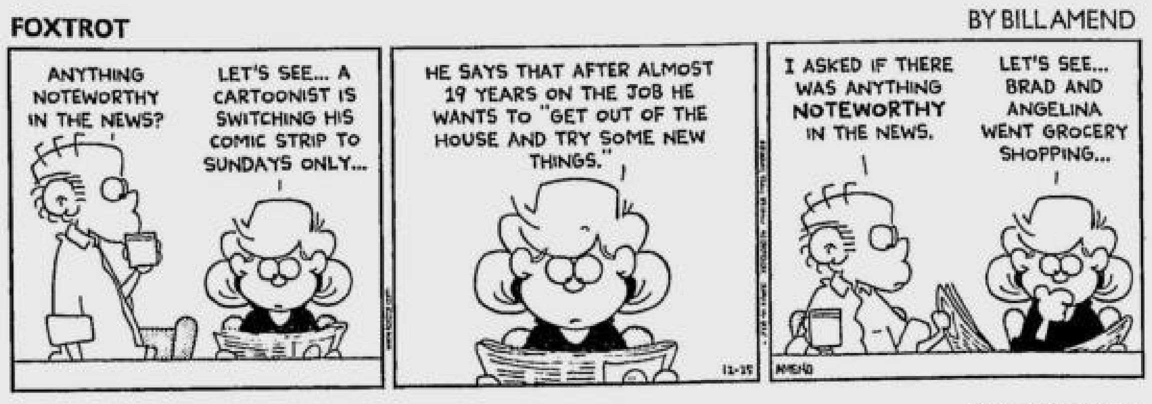
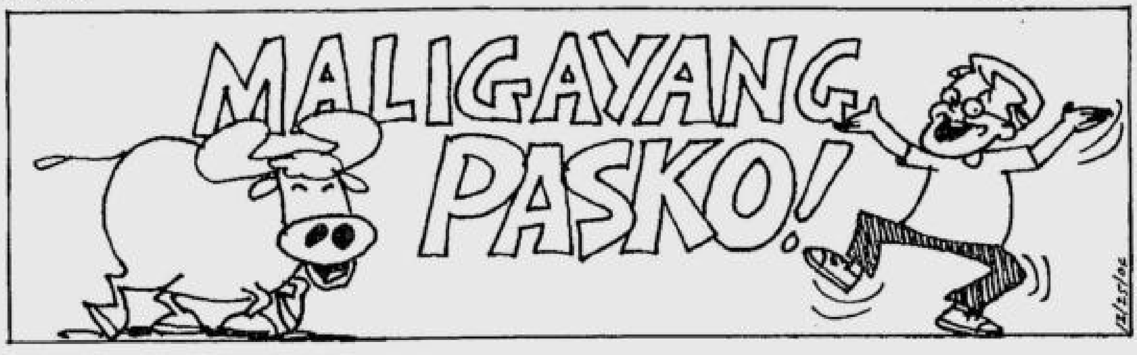
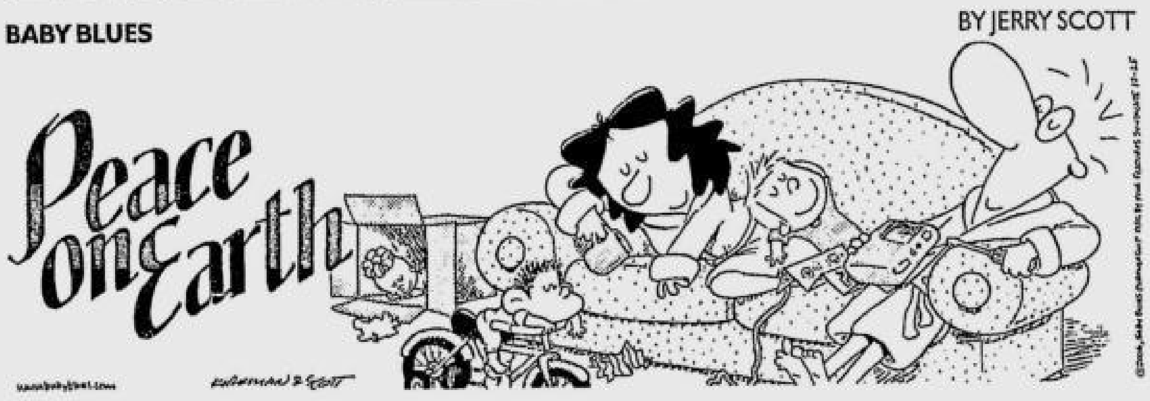
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


ANYTHING NOTEWORTHY IN THE NEWS?
LET'S SEE... A CARTOONIST IS SWITCHING HIS COMIC STRIP TO SUNDAYS ONLY...
HE SAYS THAT AFTER ALMOST 19 YEARS ON THE JOB HE WANTS TO "GET OUT OF THE HOUSE AND TRY SOME NEW THINGS."
I ASKED IF THERE WAS ANYTHING NOTEWORTHY IN THE NEWS.
LET'S SEE... BRAD AND ANGELINA WENT GROCERY SHOPPING...
12-25

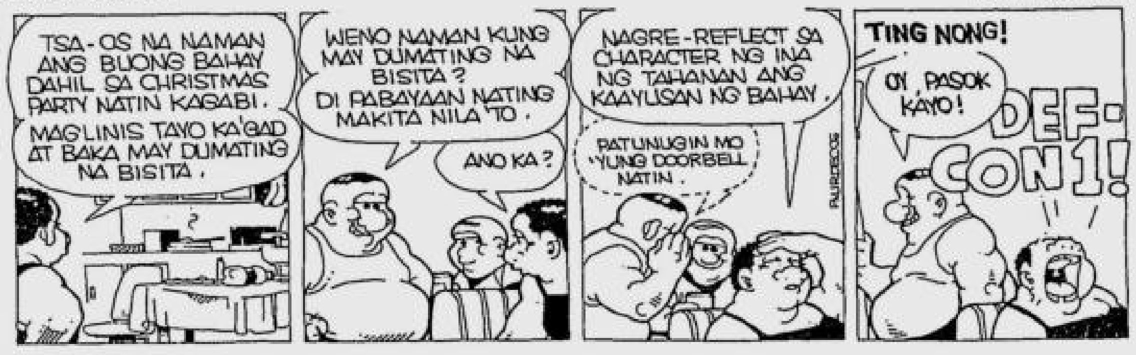
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


MALIGAYANG PASKO!
12/25/06

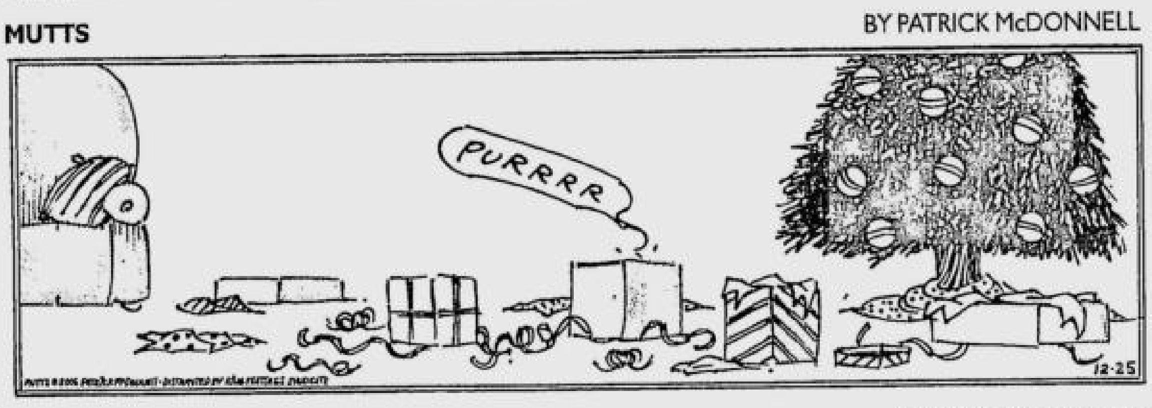
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


Peace on Earth
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

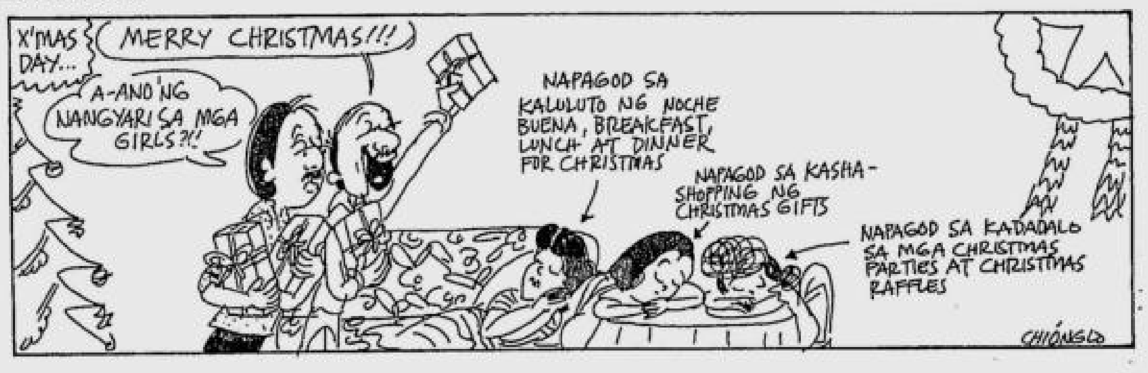
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


TSA-OS NA NAMAN ANG BUONG BAHAY DAHIL SA CHRISTMAS PARTY NATIN KAGABI.
MAG'LINIS TAYO KA'GAD AT BAKA MAY DUMATING NA BISITA.
WENO NAMAN KUNG MAY DUMATING NA BISITA? DI PABAYAAN NATING MAKITA NILA 'TO.
ANO KA?
NAGRE-REFLECT SA CHARACTER NG INA NG TAHANAN ANG KAAYUSAN NG BAHAY.
PATUNUGIN MO 'YUNG DOORBELL NATIN.
TING NONG!
OY, PASOK KAYO!
DEF-CON 1!

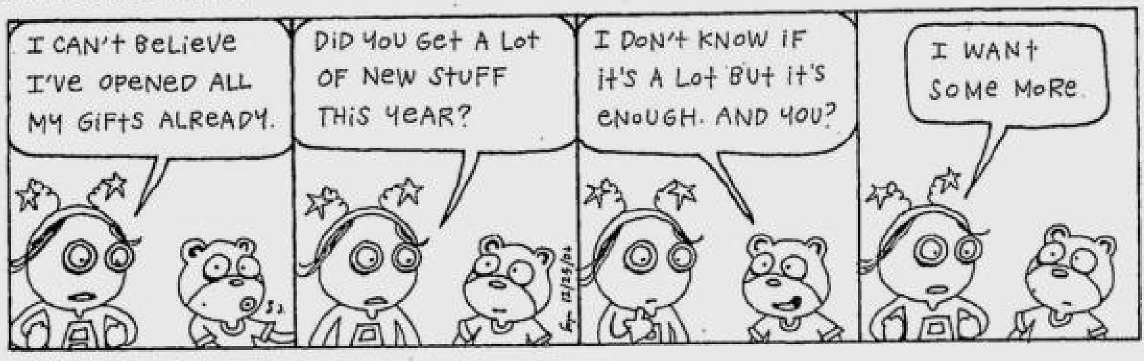
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


PURRRR
12-25

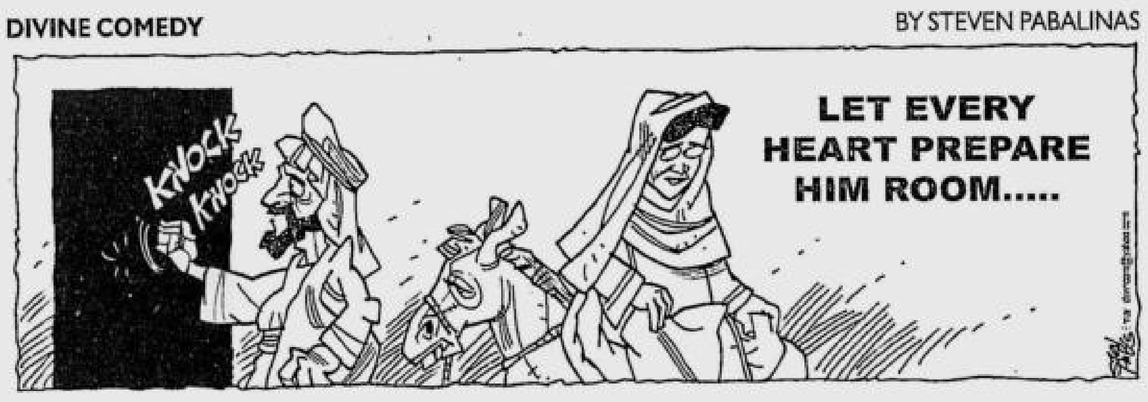
LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


X'MAS DAY...
MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!
A-ANO'NG NANGYARI SA MGA GIRLS?!
NAPAGOD SA KALULUTO NG NOCHE BUENA, BREAKFAST, LUNCH AT DINNER FOR CHRISTMAS
NAPAGOD SA KASHA-SHOPPING NG CHRISTMAS GIFTS
NAPAGOD SA KADADALO SA MGA CHRISTMAS PARTIES AT CHRISTMAS RAFFLES
CHIONGLO

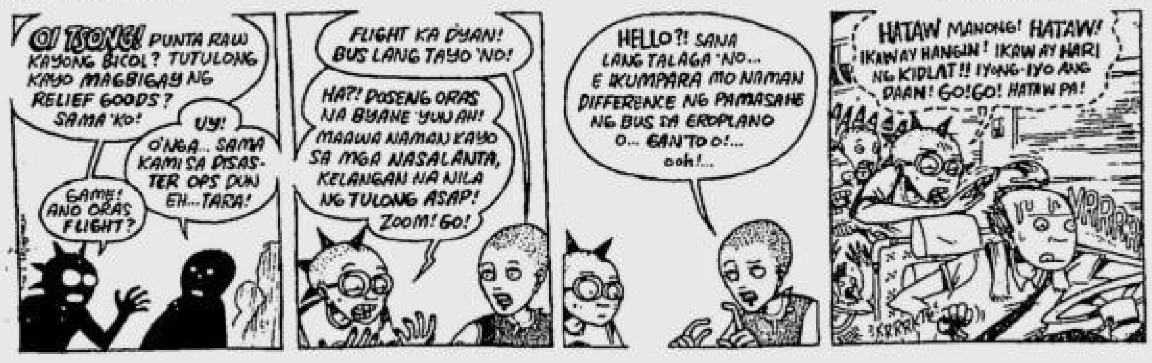
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I CAN'T BELIEVE I'VE OPENED ALL MY GIFTS ALREADY.
DID YOU GET A LOT OF NEW STUFF THIS YEAR?
I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S A LOT BUT IT'S ENOUGH. AND YOU?
I WANT SOME MORE.

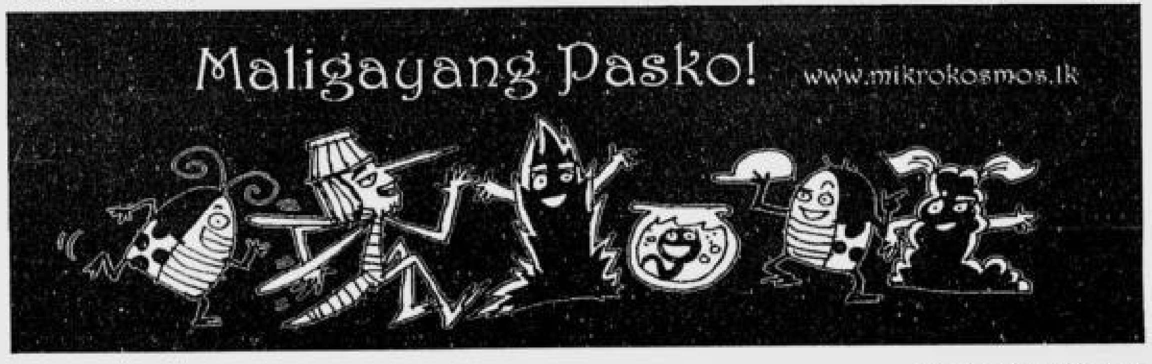
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


KNOCK KNOCK
LET EVERY HEART PREPARE HIM ROOM.....

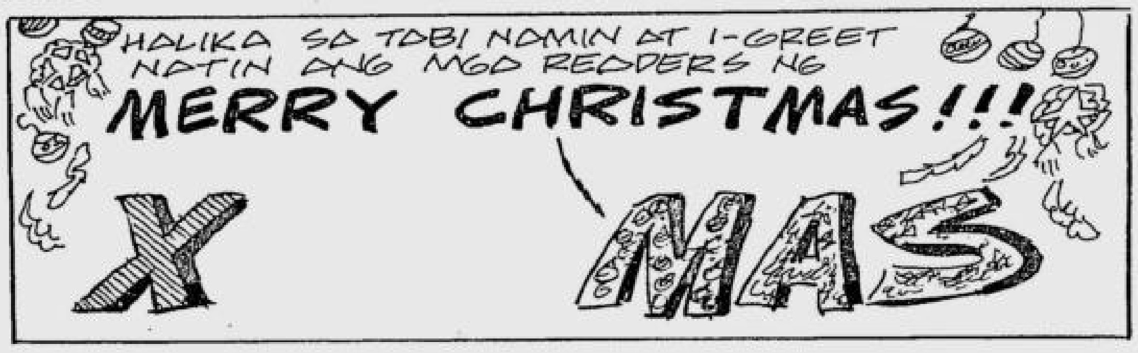
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


OI TSONG! PUNTA RAW KAYONG BICOL? TUTULONG KAYO MAGBIGAY NG RELIEF GOODS? SAMA 'KO!
UY! O'NGA... SAMA KAMI SA DISAS-TER OPS DUN EH... TARA!
GAME! ANO ORAS FLIGHT?
FLIGHT KA D'YAN! BUS LANG TAYO 'NO!
HA?! DOSENG ORAS NA BYAHE 'YUN AH!
MAAWA NAMAN KAYO SA MGA NASALANTA, KELANGAN NA NILA NG TULONG ASAP! ZOOM! GO!
HELLO?! SANA LANG TALAGA 'NO... E IKUMPARA MO NAMAN DIFFERENCE NG PAMASAHE NG BUS SA EROPLANO O... GAN'TO O!... ooh!...
HATAW MANONG! HATAW! IKAW AY HANGIN! IKAW AY HARI NG KIDLAT!! IYONG-IYO ANG DAAN! GO!GO! HATAW PA!
AAAAAA
VRRRR
SKRRRKT

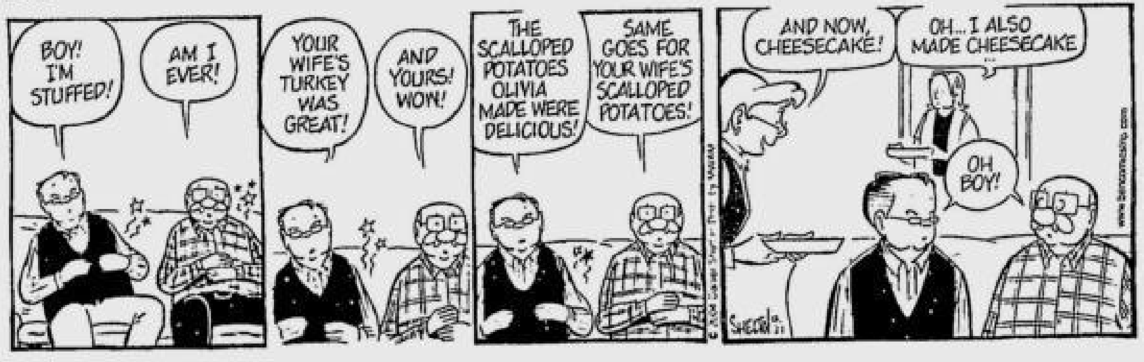
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


Maligayang Pasko!
www.mikrokosmos.tk

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


HALIKA SA TABI NAMIN AT I-GREET NATIN ANG MGA READERS NG
MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!
X
MAS

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


BOY! I'M STUFFED!
AM I EVER!
YOUR WIFE'S TURKEY WAS GREAT!
AND YOURS! WOW!
THE SCALLOPED POTATOES OLIVIA MADE WERE DELICIOUS!
SAME GOES FOR YOUR WIFE'S SCALLOPED POTATOES!
AND NOW, CHEESECAKE!
OH... I ALSO MADE CHEESECAKE
OH BOY!

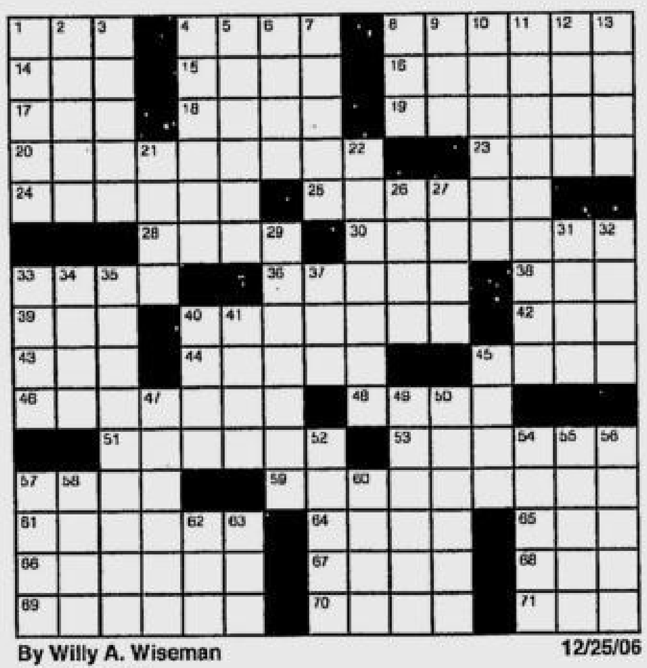
DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 War casualties grp.
4 Odds & ends
8 Playwright Beckett
14 French friend
15 Golden Rule word
16 Rundown
17 __ populi
18 Junk e-mail
19 Short distance runner
20 Figure-eight maker
23 Old Italian bread?
24 Pass in the Sierra Nevada
25 Morsel
28 Memo abbr.
30 One capering about
33 Stinging insect
36 Meat jelly
38 Govt. med. grp.
39 Time period
40 Valentino of Hollywood
42 HRE part
43 Beiderbecke of jazz
44 Stage whisper
45 Rehan and Huxtable
46 Lightning flash in Leipzig
48 Stitched
51 Bordeaux brothers
53 Word with tap of belly
57 Frizzy do
59 Spies' base
61 See 52D
64 Second starter
65 Greek letter
66 Unkempt
67 Small combo
68 Writer Fleming
69 "Oedipus" composer
70 Circle parts
71 Abnormal: pref.

DOWN

1 Boy with a sling
2 Sunoco rival
3 Female fox
4 Minuteman's weapon
5 To some extent
6 Sports figure
7 Shoemaker-Levy, e.g.
8 J. Hancocked?
9 Coach Parseghian
10 Sheet fabric
11 Disunited
12 Hungarian river
13 Instrument for Orpheus
21 Break suddenly
22 Wavelets
26 Tap problem
27 Baroque master
29 Gordimer and Strossner
31 Ms. Bombeck
32 Knocks lightly
33 Karrie of the LPGA
34 Seed coat
35 Rosette-shaped flower
37 Instant lawn
40 Tear down
41 Manipulator
45 A.D. word
47 Rainbow and brook fish
49 Utopian
50 Exuberant cries
52 With 61A, Tim Allen film with "The"
54 Son of Venus
55 School paper
56 Horse controls
57 Piece of land
58 Custard tart
60 "M*A*S*H" co-star
62 Cul-de-__
63 Pridefulness



By Willy A. Wiseman
New York, NY
12/25/06

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

O	B	S	E	Q	U	I	O	U	S	■	M	M	C	M
C	O	N	S	U	L	T	A	N	T	■	H	O	H	O
T	R	I	L	A	T	E	R	A	L	■	O	B	A	N
A	S	P	■	S	I	R	■	G	U	T	■	I	P	A
■	■	■	F	A	M	A	■	I	C	I	C	L	E	S
S	N	E	E	R	A	T	■	N	I	P	P	E	R	■
F	I	N	E	S	S	E	■	G	A	S	O	H	O	L
P	C	T	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	O	N	O
D	A	H	O	M	E	Y	■	S	C	H	E	M	E	R
■	R	U	D	D	L	E	■	T	R	A	G	E	D	Y
M	A	S	S	I	E	R	■	R	U	N	G	■	■	■
C	G	I	■	I	V	E	■	A	L	G	■	M	M	E
G	U	A	N	■	A	V	O	N	L	A	D	I	E	S
E	A	S	E	■	T	A	N	G	E	R	I	N	E	S
E	N	T	O	■	E	N	T	E	R	S	I	N	T	O

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12/25/06

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're intrigued with mystery and otherworldliness. You want answers to big questions (and you'll find them). You're willing to take risks for the achievements you desire. You believe it's important to stretch and grow. You always play the long shot. Keep an open mind for your year ahead. All kinds of new avenues and new beginnings are possible!

Birthdate of: Carlos Castaneda, author; Jimmy Buffett, singer/songwriter; Sissy Spacek, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You're on your soapbox preaching to others today. You're convinced you're right about something political, religious or philosophical. It might also be related to travel and education. (Lighten up.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You have a penetrating mind today. You can easily get to the bottom of anything, especially issues related to shared wealth or other people's property. Do your due diligence.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Avoid arguments with partners and close friends today. Either you are coming on very strong or you will attract someone like this to you. What's the point of all these egos bumping into each other?

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is a good day to make repairs and introduce reforms to your job or how you do things. You'll come up with a better mousetrap today.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Parents must be gentle with children today. Remember the advice of Goethe: "Correction does much, but encouragement does more."

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Conversations with family members are very intense today. Be cool. Instead, use this energy to make repairs at home, especially with plumbing, bathrooms or garbage. Clean up dark, dirty areas.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Be careful today. You like to have harmony; however, today you're practically obsessed about something. Obsession is not harmony. Quite the opposite—it's lopsided! Mellow out.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You might be obsessed with money issues or cash flow today. Perhaps you're determined to buy something? You might want to sleep on it and give things a sober, second thought.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a day of intense mental activity! You want to get to the bottom of something. It's as if a particular idea is running your life right now.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is a marvelous day for research of any kind. From your point of view, nothing is too much trouble. You will look under every rock for the answers you seek.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): A friend might feel threatened by the intensity of your words today. Or perhaps vice versa. Be careful about your discussions with others. Go gently.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Discussions with parents and bosses could turn into Bad Day at Black Rock. Don't throw down the gauntlet. Avoid issues that seem to be black-and-white. Cool your jets.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

9					3			1
		3	6			7	2	
	2	4	9	8				
	8	1	5	7				2
		5	1		9	3		
7				4	8	1	6	
				3	2	8	9	
	4	9			1	5		
6			7					4

Difficulty Level ★
12/25

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

6	7	3	1	4	2	8	9	5
9	1	5	6	8	7	2	3	4
4	8	2	9	5	3	6	1	7
2	5	4	3	7	9	1	8	6
1	3	7	4	6	8	9	5	2
8	9	6	2	1	5	7	4	3
5	6	1	8	2	4	3	7	9
7	2	9	5	3	1	4	6	8
3	4	8	7	9	6	5	2	1

Difficulty Level ★★★★★
12/24

'Myself, Elsewhere' by Carmen Guerrero Nakpil released

Carmen Guerrero Nakpil
MYSELF, ELSEWHERE

"MYSELF, ELSEWHERE," is a new book by iconic writer and historian Carmen Guerrero Nakpil.

The first volume of a three-part series is both an autobiography and a memoir of old pre-war Ermita. It is not the usual compilation of published essays, but entirely new and original material written in a few months in 2006. It covers the period between 1922, the start of what Nick Joaquin called as Manila's "most glittering decade," and 1945, the destruction of Manila. The gentility of pre-war Ermita makes for dramatic contrast to the brutality of the battle that destroyed it.

Using flashbacks and fast-forwards, Nakpil provides historical background and foreground to the highly personal account of her early years and family history. This book also describes the cultural frame, the manners, and morals, gossip and intrigue of a small Filipino town on Manila Bay during the first half of the 20th century and it does so with humor and also sorrow over its tragedy.

The cover of "Myself, Elsewhere" is a full-color reproduction of the author's portrait, done in the 1940's by National Artist Vicente Manansala. Also in the book is a collection of family photographs as well as maps of old Manila.

To reserve advance copies of the limited-edition work, call 8172940 or text 0921-4011480.

Give a book on Christmas Day

STILL LOOKING FOR an ideal Christmas gift for your friends and loved ones?

New Day Publishers is offering a wide range of reading materials of up to 50 percent discount with its month-long book sale, dubbed "Give A Book on Christmas Day."

The whole family can choose from hundreds of comic books, cookbooks, inspirational materials, religious, devotional, Philippine history, self-help and school-oriented reading.

According to noted author Lenore Hershey, "Do give books—religious or otherwise—for Christmas. They're never fattening, seldom sinful and permanently personal."

Yuppies can indulge in an abundance of insightful self-help books on practical topics such as John Byrne's "Survival Tips at Work" and "Survival Tips for Students," Liz Babbs' "The Thing About Calories," "The Thing About Stress," and "The Thing About the Office."

For couples planning to tie the knot or who want to enhance their marital union, there is "365 Ways to Make the Most of Your Marriage," by Juliet Janvrin and Lucy Selleck.

One of New Day's most recent bestsellers is the handbook "Equipments, Pictorials & For A While: 284 Common Mistakes in English made by Pinoys" by Elizabeth Ong.

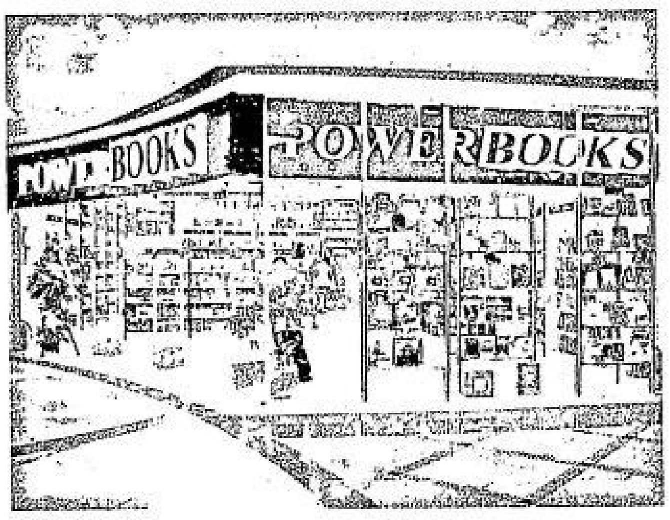
The book is a refresher for students, teachers, professionals and communicators who want to help the country regain supremacy in English proficiency.

Better still, gift yourself or your loved ones with an annual subscription. "The Upper Room" is a bimonthly Bible reading guide used by over 10 million families worldwide. It contains simple and practical guidelines for Christian living based on personal experiences of ordinary people inspired by God's faithfulness and providence.

Finally, get your dose of Rizaliana as the country marks the 110th anniversary of the martyrdom of the national hero with "Rizal and Heroic Traditions: A Sense of National Destiny," by Pablo S. Trillana III, a collection of essays on Rizal, history, governance, education and culture.

Sale runs Dec. 11-29, 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Mondays-Fridays. Call 9288046 or 9275982, or e-mail newdayorders@edsamail.com.ph for details.

New bookstore branch at mall



POWERBOOKS at Festival Mall

POWERBOOKS SPECIALTY store recently opened its newest branch at the second level of Festival Supermall in Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang.

Loyal customers can get the opportunity to receive special privileges by applying for the PowerBooks Powercard. Powercard holders who have accumulated a minimum of P15,000 worth of purchases in one year will become automatically upgraded to the Powercard Plus.

PowerBooks Festival Supermall branch is open 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Call 8508221 and telefax number 8423993.

Book on Pinoy speculative fiction

Philippine Speculative Fiction

"PHILIPPINE SPECULATIVE FICTION VOLUME 2," a collection of short fiction of the imagination that includes fantasy, science fiction, horror, magic realism and surrealism written by Filipinos at home and abroad, is off the press.

Nineteen Filipino authors from as far away as France and The Netherlands are represented in the book: Jessi Albano, Nikki Alfar, Oscar Bryan Alvarez, Kate Aton-Osias, Michael A.R. Co, Andrew Drilon, Russell Stanley Q. Geronimo, Apol Lejano-Massebieau, Joshua L. Lim So, Rochita Loenen-Ruiz, Allan B. Lopez, Joseph F. Nacino, Madeline Rae Ong, Alexander Marcos Osias, Jonathan Jimena Siason, Vincent Michael Simbulan, Yvette Natalie U. Tan and Mia Tijam.

"Philippine Speculative Fiction Volume 2" is edited by Dean Francis Alfar. Alfar's plays have been performed in different venues across the country. His fiction has been published in local and international publications such as Strange Horizons, Rabid Transit: Menagerie, and the Year's Best Fantasy and Horror.

Alfar is the recipient of nine Don Carlos Palanca Awards for Literature; the Grand Prize for Novel in 2005 for "Salamanca" (Ateneo Press, 2006); and National Book Award for the graphic novels "Siglo: Freedom" and "Siglo: Passion." His first collection of short fiction, "The Kite of Stars and Other Stories," is scheduled for release in 2007 by Anvil Publishing.

"Philippine Speculative Fiction Volume 2" is the only anthology of its kind in the country. The first volume was a finalist of the National Book Award for Best Anthology. The book is available at Fully Booked, Booktopia and Comic Quest.

Call 9141488 or e-mail dean@kestrelimc.com.

Alumni homecoming of Sta. Cruz Institute of Ilocos Sur

A GENERAL ALUMNI HOMECOMING OF ALL BATCHES FROM 1963 up to 2006 of the Sta. Cruz Institute (SCI) of Sta. Cruz, Ilocos Sur, is slated Dec. 26 at the SCI grounds. For details, call Ofelia Jamilosa-Silapan, president, SCI Alumni Association, at 0921-5518738.

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possible without the tireless
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The band members consist of Grandpa Allen, 72, a retired pastor from the big island of Kailua-Kona Hawaii, his son Michael, and Michael's children Leilani, … The band is named

Theater located in … District, San Francisco.

It was a thrilling, if not exhilarating experience, sitting in the front row with cameras blinking and camcorders rolling, all the while watching the percussionists and dancers do their thing.

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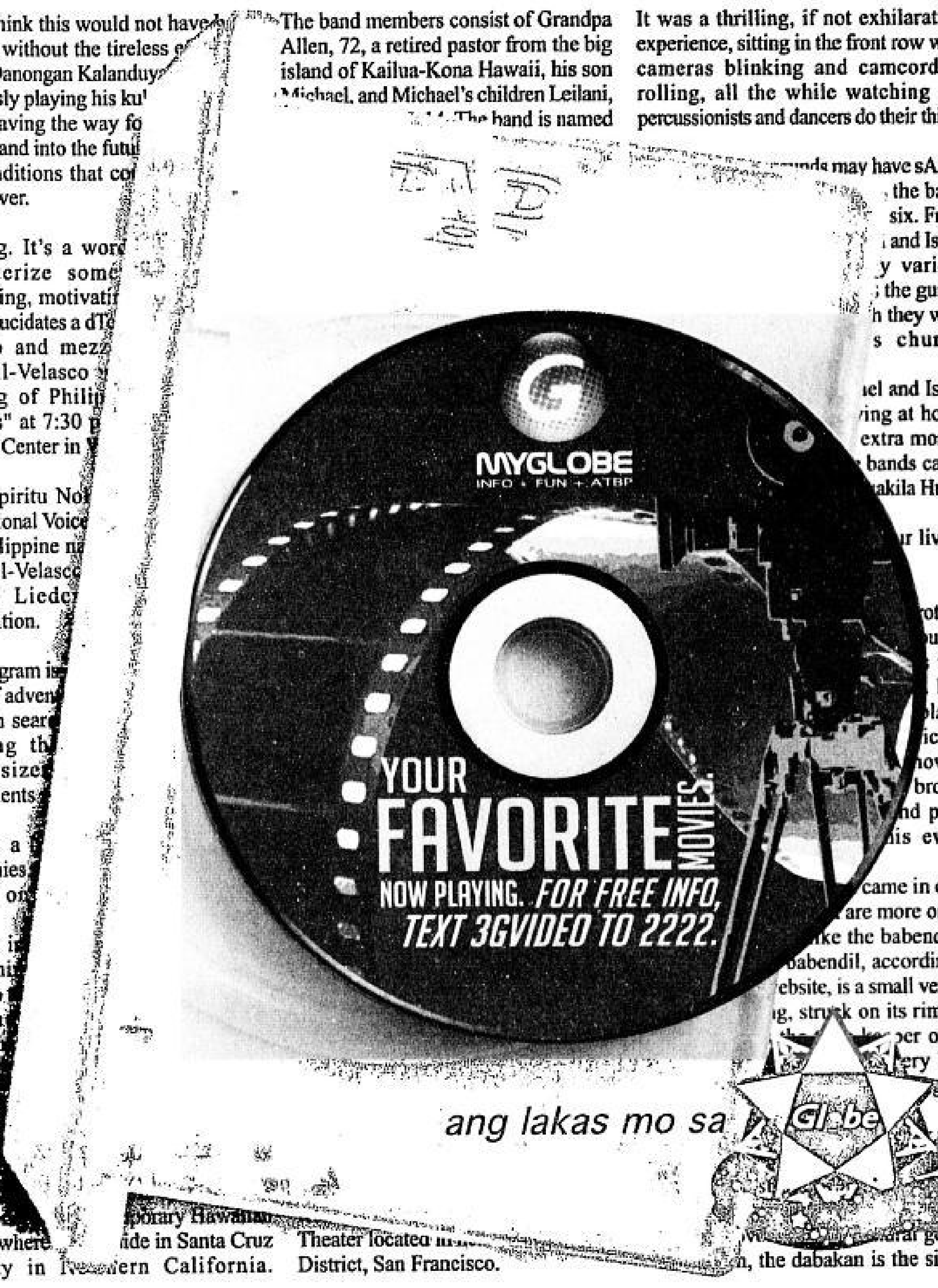

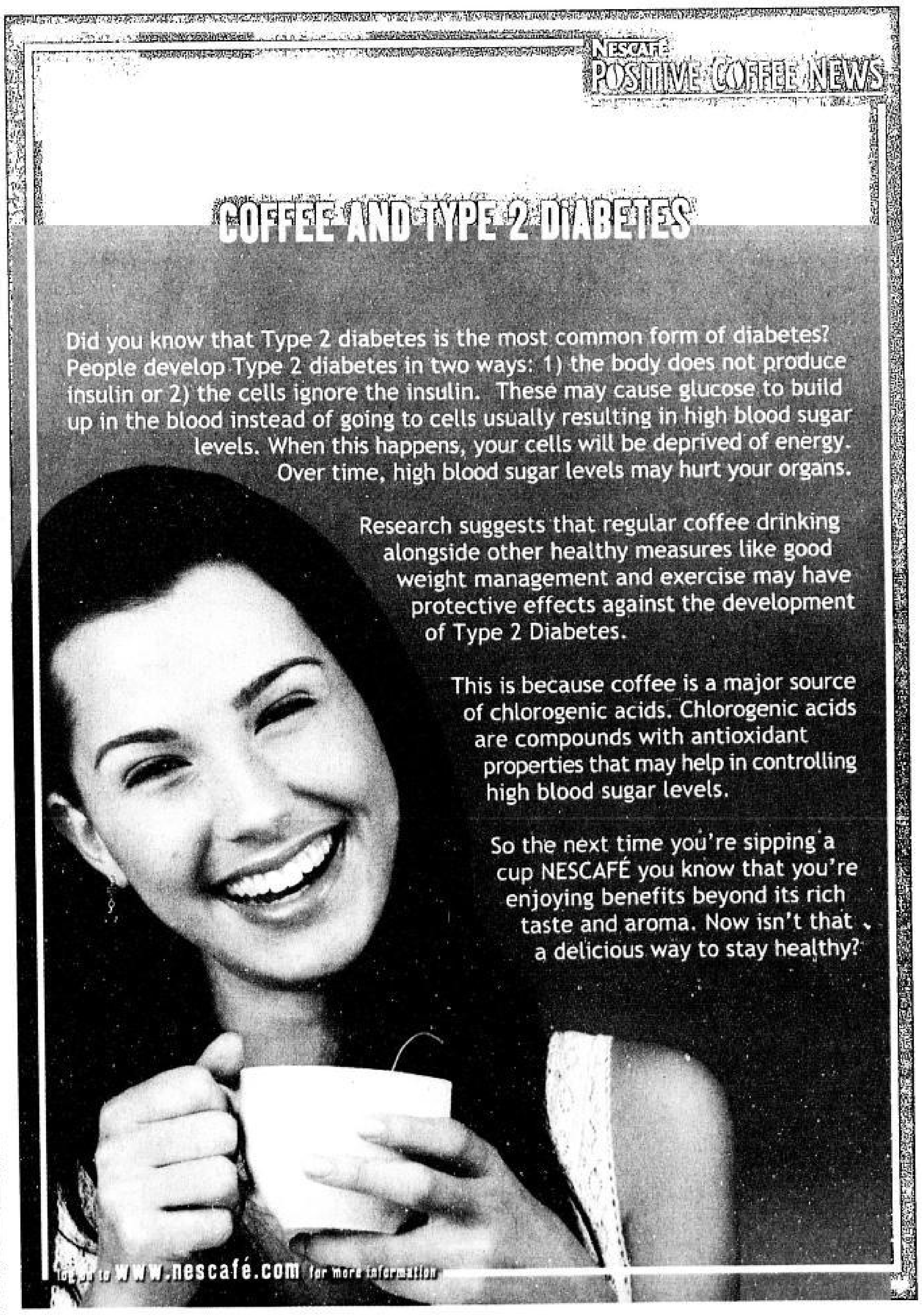

Did you know that Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes? People develop Type 2 diabetes in two ways: 1) the body does not produce insulin or 2) the cells ignore the insulin. These may cause glucose to build up in the blood instead of going to cells usually resulting in high blood sugar levels. When this happens, your cells will be deprived of energy. Over time, high blood sugar levels may hurt your organs.

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When Dulce dreamed her dream

From page C1

of "Oh, Holy Night!"

Dulce was in tears as she left the theater. "I felt I was elevated as a singer, singing with Mr. Gonzaga. This is a milestone in my singing career. I didn't realize I would go this far."

Indeed, nothing in her past life prepared Dulce for a team-up with an operatic tenor.

As far as Dulce can recall, she started singing at age two and—probably influenced by her mother, who sings in the church choir—she, too, became a fixture in the chapel choirs in a small village of Pardo town in Cebu.

She didn't take up voice lessons, she didn't study vocal placement, but when she debuted with the Philippine Philharmonic a few years ago, opera connoisseurs agreed she had the timber of a Marilyn Horne and the dramatic intensity of a legendary Visayan mezzo named Conchita Gaston. Toward the end of her first PPO engagement, the CCP crowd gave Dulce an ovation.

After a New York audition, "Miss Saigon" composer Claude-Michel Schonberg compared Dulce's voice to a Boeing 747 taking off. After singing "The Movie in My Mind," Schonberg—along with Kevin Stites (musical director of "Les Miz," "Phantom of the Opera" and "Sunset Boulevard")—requested other songs and, after her rendition, gave her an ovation.

"I get strength from people who can appreciate me on another level," says Dulce. "Early in my singing life, I never thought of music as art. It was just a source of livelihood. But when you told me I deserved to sing with a classical orchestra, then I must have done something good."

Dulce's humble roots probably prepared her for greatness. Though she had no voice teacher, life was her best teacher. She grew up in a quaint little village between a mountain and a river where the only singer she could relate to was the voice on a neighborhood transistor radio. It was the voice of Pilita Corrales.

"I easily connected with her because she is from Cebu," Dulce says.

And soon she was dreaming a dream. She won the province's amateur singing contests hands down.

She began singing in musicals. At 17, she won her first international singing competition in Hong Kong and became a grand-prize winner twice. She then sang all over the place and, finally, all over the world.

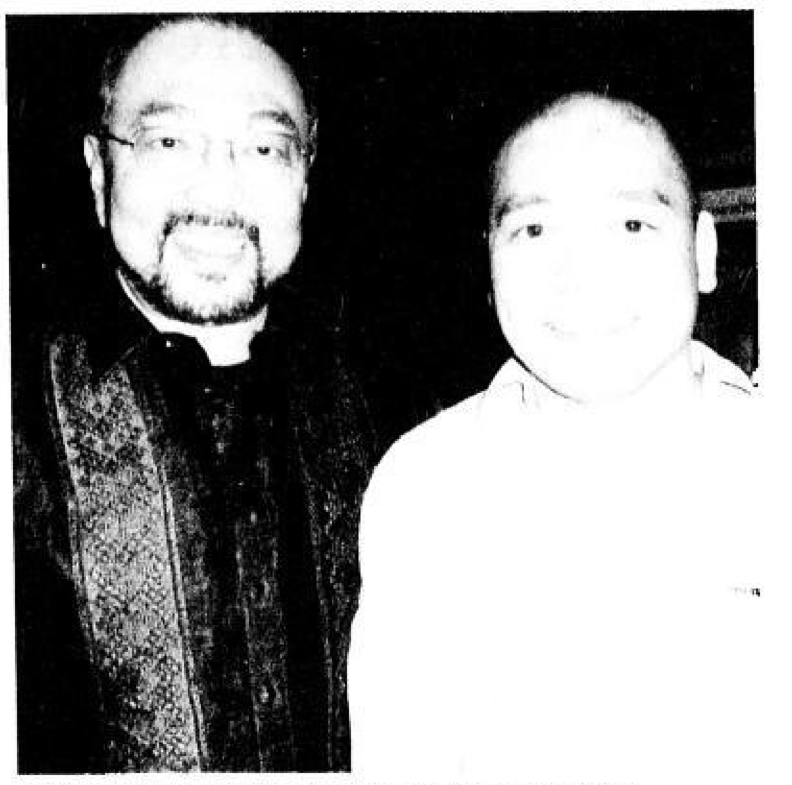
One restless day in her 15-year-old marriage, as she was enjoying her orchestral debut, her first marriage ended. That's when she took stock of herself and figured out a new life.

New life

Through all these, there was a fine young man 10 years younger than she was, who commiserated and offered solace while her life was almost breaking up. He also advised her not to be harsh on herself.

The man insisted that a new life was possible and that she could start all over again.

"You have to shape up so I can listen to your winning songs, 'Ako ang Nagwagi' and 'Maalaala Mo Kaya,'" said a special friend, Bernard Cruzata.



OTONIEL Gonzaga with a local fan, pianist Jonathan Coo

Bernard is a naval architect based in Germany and was aide-de-camp of comedian-turned-politican Bert Marcelo during a political campaign. But at the time she first saw him, he was just an acquaintance and not even a friend.

Out of her misery and suffering, a new love bloomed for Dulce. They fell in love, had one love child, and got legally married after annulling her previous marriage.

They also accepted an invitation for Bible study and soon became Born Again Christians.

"I started analyzing my life, began asking questions, and got curious about this so-called generational curses," she relates. "Because of this, I had what you would call inner healing. Now I know how to deal with betrayal because I know where it came from. Then I just surrendered my new life to the Lord and realized a new life was possible."

She started singing again, her links with her Cebu folks were restored, her ex-husband allowed her to see her kids from the previous marriage, she became a full-time mother to her eight-year-old daughter (with Bernard), and a new Dulce emerged.

Turning point

"I realized that I was also harsh on myself. I was not fair to myself," she admits. "This spiritual awakening was a turning point. Suddenly I have a full picture of who I am in the eyes of God. I also realized I was harboring false humility on my part. So I started asking questions: Why did you allow it to yourself? I realized now that you can stand firm and you can have a choice."

She says her share of personal agony enables her to connect with the song and give it a new life. "When I sing, I have to draw out something inside me. Before, when I sang sad songs, I had to take a deep look at the lowest pit of my life. It gave real-life vibration to my singing, but I could not breathe. Now I can draw experience from the saddest chapter of my life and finally learn how to breathe."

The song "I Dreamed a Dream" (from "Les Miz") is a case in point.

Part of the lyrics actually reflects her life ("There was a time it all went wrong").

Turning to her husband Bernard and daughter, she says: "They are my real wealth now. I don't have the material possessions I used to have, but they are nothing compared to my restored relationships, a new-found voice to speak my heart out, and peace of mind."

Balara memoirs to be launched

THE COFFEE-TABLE BOOK "BALARA FILters—Playground Of Our Youth" by Agnes Rule-Yaptenco is a chronicle of her childhood spent within the Balara Filters Compound in Quezon City. Yaptenco confesses she is not a professional writer but created the book as a "labor of love."

Completed in 1938, Balara served not only as the water-purifying plant of the country's capital but was also the popular summer resort for picnics, swimming and frolicking on the well-maintained grounds. The amphitheater and the dancing pavilions were venues of many social events during the '50s.

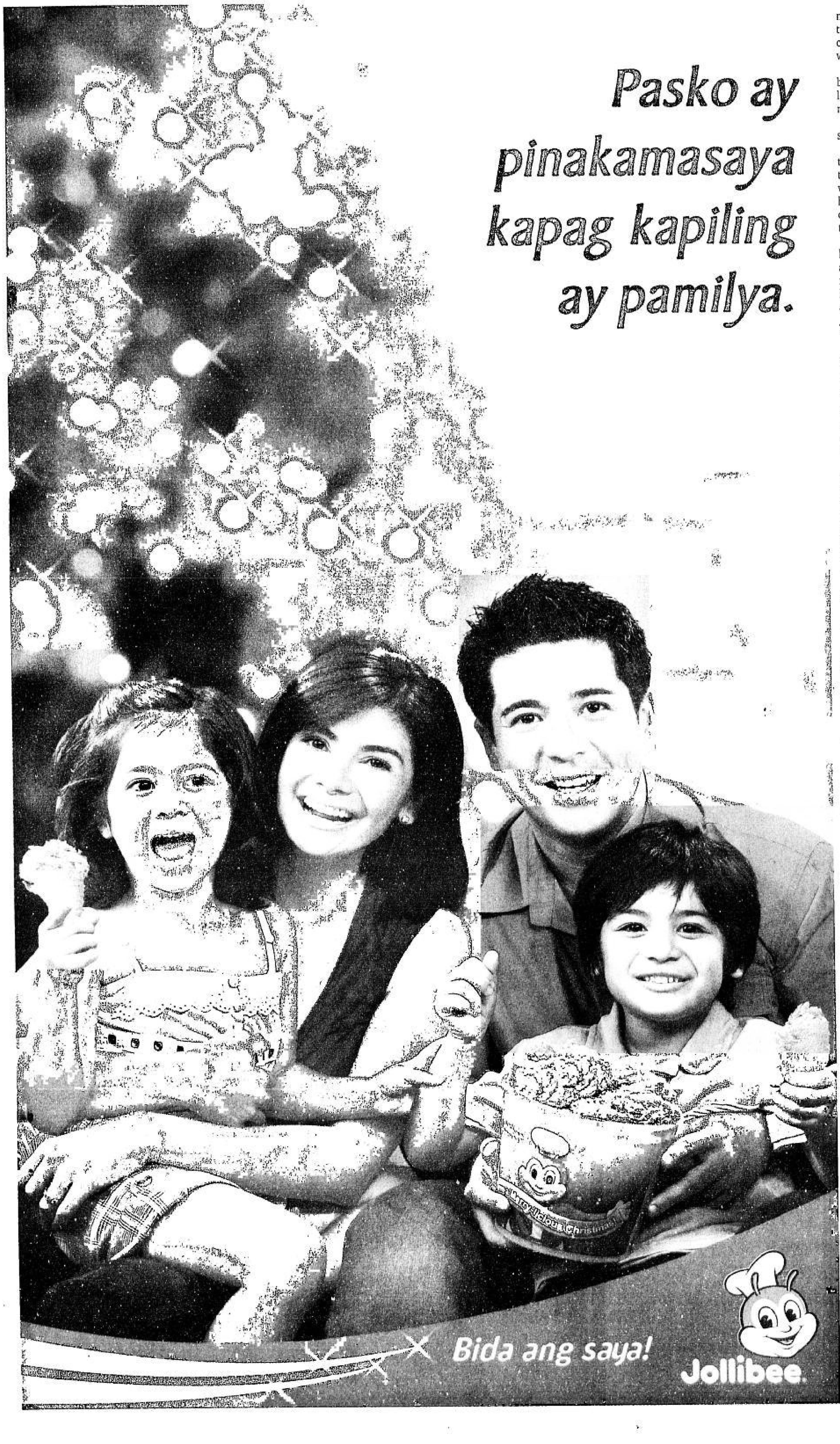
The foreword was written by architect Francisco "Bobby" Mañosa, whose father, engineer Manuel Mañosa, was general manager of the Metropolitan Water District after World War II. He started the rehabilitation of the Balara Filters to make it the first recreational park for the Manileños.

The younger Mañosa, then only in his first year as an architecture student at UST, recalls his father asking Fine Arts students from UP to design things for the plants. Being an Ilocano and a practical person, the older Mañosa tapped the students for designs rather than spent for professional services of licensed architects.

One student who responded to the challenge was Napoleon Abueva, who did several sculptures. Of course, Bobby and his brother Manny were also part of the design team of their father. Bobby recalls weekends spent in their Balara house with UST friends such as Lindy Locsin, Desiderio Santos, Nonoy Benedicto, Alfonso Cortez.

Balara Filters was home to many employees of Balara Filtration Plant who resided in quaint little houses provided by the administration. This is the scenery where Yaptenco set the narrative of her growing years with many other residents of Balara.

A grand reunion of residents of Balara Filters is scheduled Dec. 28, 6 p.m. at the Windmill coinciding with the launching of the book.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Jollibee

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**
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FUN SNAPS FROM 2006

In the next few days, we will be running our favorite pics of stars taken the past year. We start with hot singer-actress-body beautiful Vina Morales, who's cool in our book, never mind that she slapped we-know-who over a case of kiss-and-tell. Well, she wishes it known that she's no... that's right, read it right there. This one was snapped by Rudy Esperas during Vina's 20th anniversary concert, "Showgirl," held at the Big Dome in August and set for a repeat in February.

2 int'l wins for RP docu

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

FILIPINO FILMMAKER KHAVN DE LA Cruz's short documentary, "Rugby Boyz," has won two international honors—in Toronto, Canada, and in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

In mid-November, the eight-minute film won a Special Mention in the 10th Reel Asian International Film Festival in Toronto—specifically, in the Best Documentary category presented by the National Film Board. Big winner in this section was "Umma" by Hohyun Joung of Canada/Korea.

"This festival focuses on Asians from different parts of the world," De la Cruz told INQUIRER Entertainment in a phone interview.

On Dec. 10, the same short film won the Best Documentary honor in the 16th Rio de Janeiro International Short Film Festival.

According to the festival's website, 360 short films were chosen from a field of 4,031 entries. Grand Prize in the international competition went to "Starfly" by Beryl Koltz of Luxembourg.

Eduardo Cerveira, the Rio de Janeiro programmer, invited the Filipino film to the Brazilian filmfest.

De la Cruz explained that his digital movie "is not pure documentary, because I also used some fictional elements. But organizers of foreign festivals have expanded their definition of documentaries."

With a Sony digital camera, De la Cruz shot his movie in the slums of Tondo, Manila. "I just shot the kids while they were doing the things they usually do in a day—playing, rapping, dancing and div-

2 INT'L/E2

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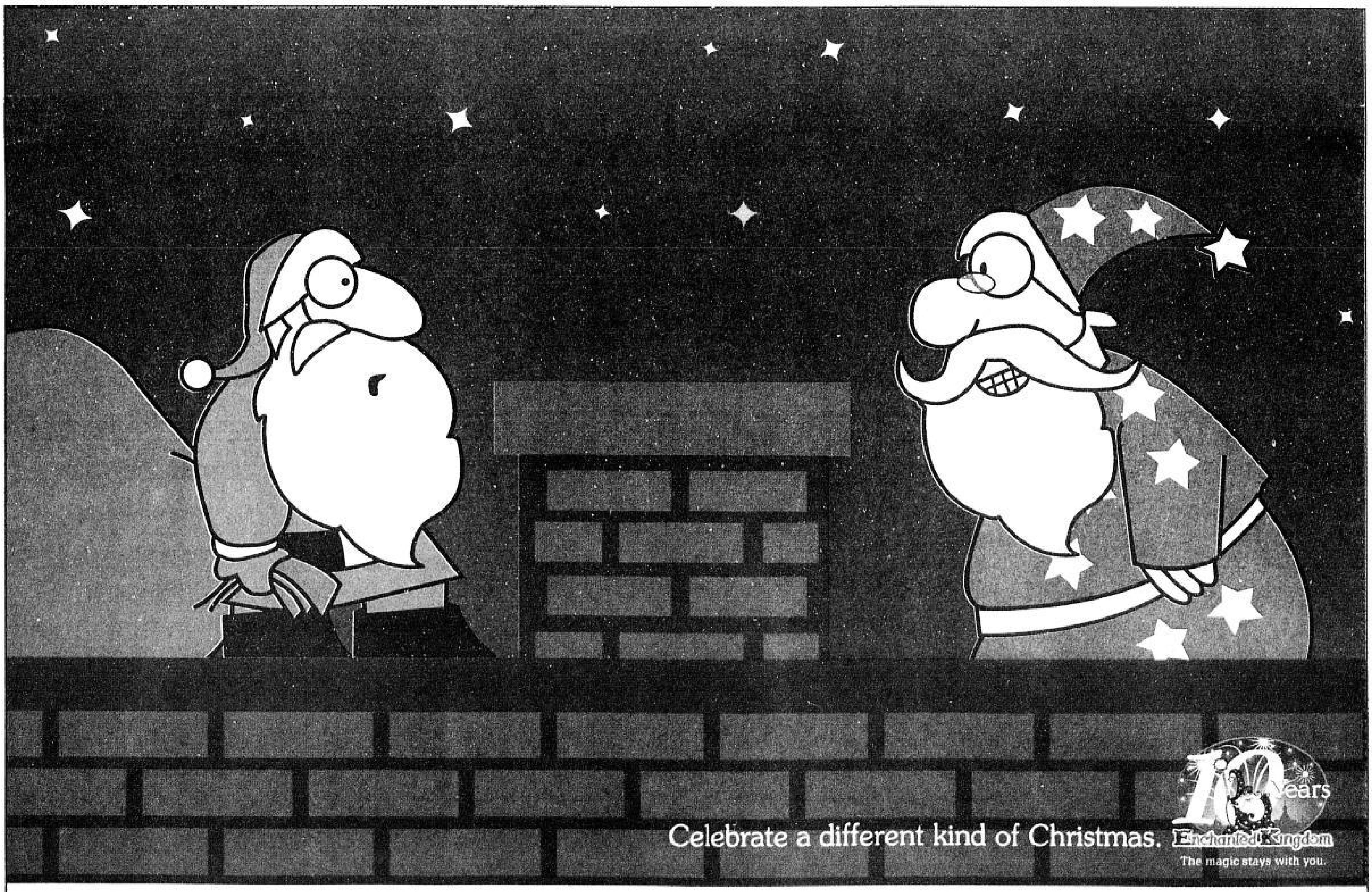

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2 int'l wins for RP docu

From page E1

ing in the polluted waters [of Pasig River]."

The movie features real slum kids, he said, "a cast of non-actors, but not all of them are necessarily junkies."

He clarified that the title is a play of words. "Apart from rugby [solvent] addicts, it also refers to the sport rugby. I asked the kids to play rugby or soccer for the camera."

Earlier, in May, "Rugby Boyz" received a Special Jury Prize at the 52nd Oberhausen International Short Film Festival in Germany.

The docu has also been invited to different film fests all over the world. It premiered in the Rotterdam International Film Festival (Netherlands) and participated in the Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival (Czech Republic), Busan Asian Short Film Festival (Korea), Hamburg International Short Film Festival (Germany), Vila Do Conde International Short Film

2 INT'L/E3

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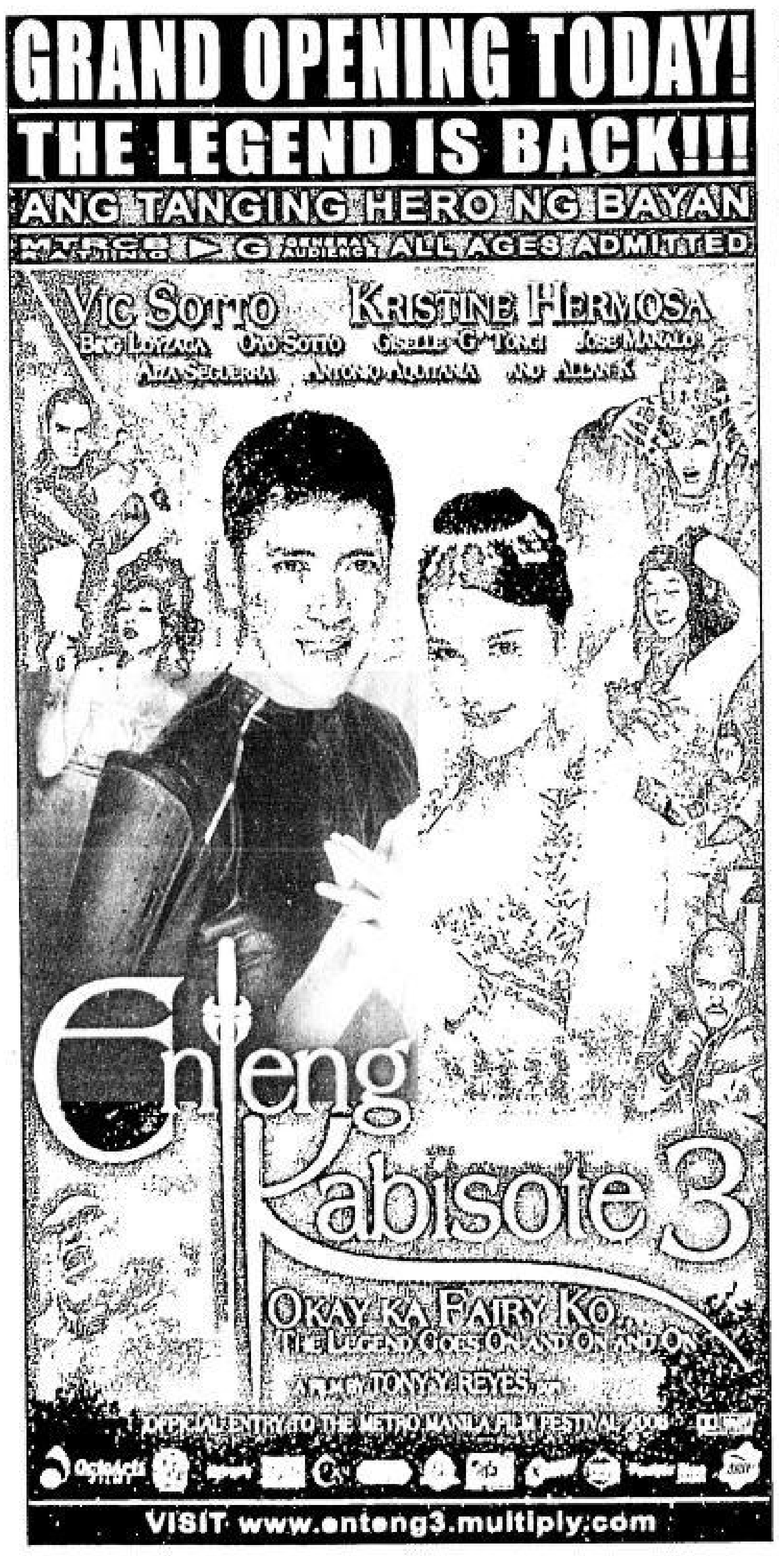
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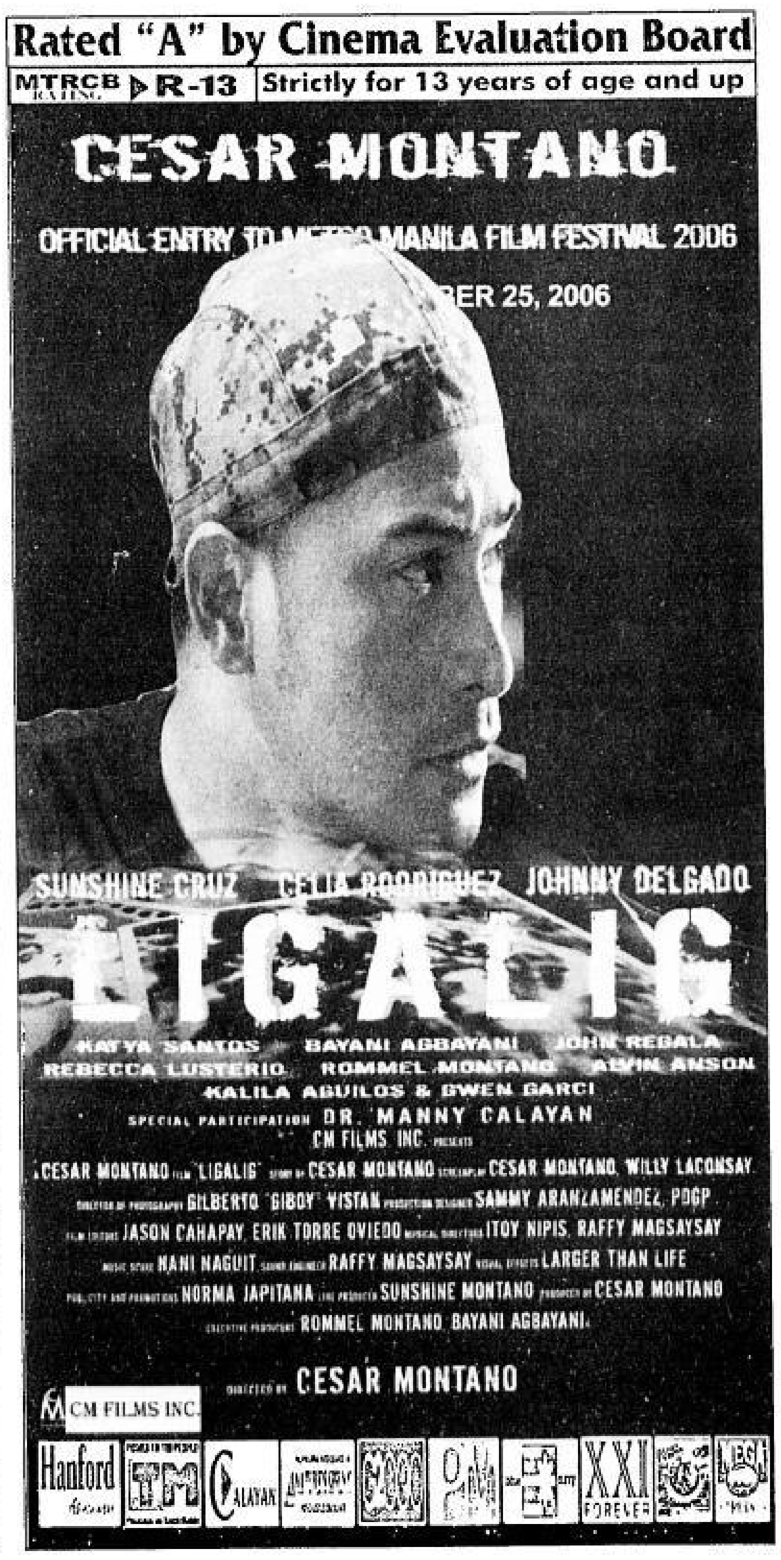
CESAR MONTANO
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BER 25, 2006
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KATYA SANTOS BAYANI AGBAYANI JOHN REGALA
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DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GILBERTO "GIBOY" VISTAN PRODUCTION DESIGNER SAMMY ARANZAMENDEZ, PDGP
FILM EDITORS JASON CAHAPAY, ERIK TORRE OVIEDO MUSICAL DIRECTORS ITOY NIPIS, RAFFY MAGSAYSAY
MUSIC SCORE NANI NAGUIT SOUND ENGINEER RAFFY MAGSAYSAY VISUAL EFFECTS LARGER THAN LIFE
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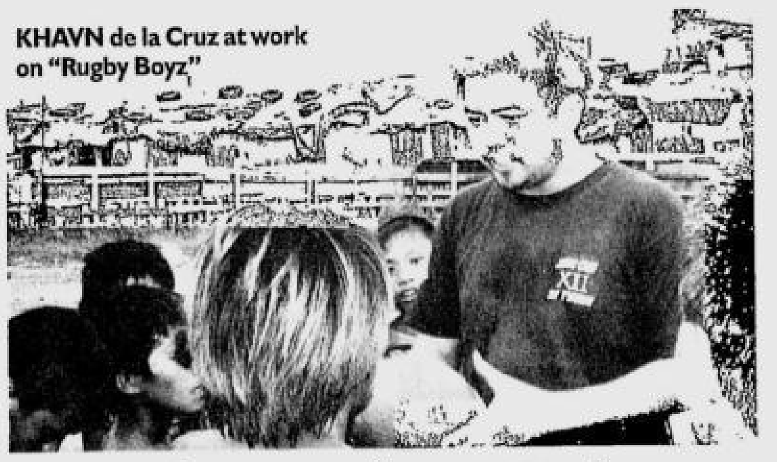


KHAVN de la Cruz at work on "Rugby Boyz"

2 int'l wins for RP docu

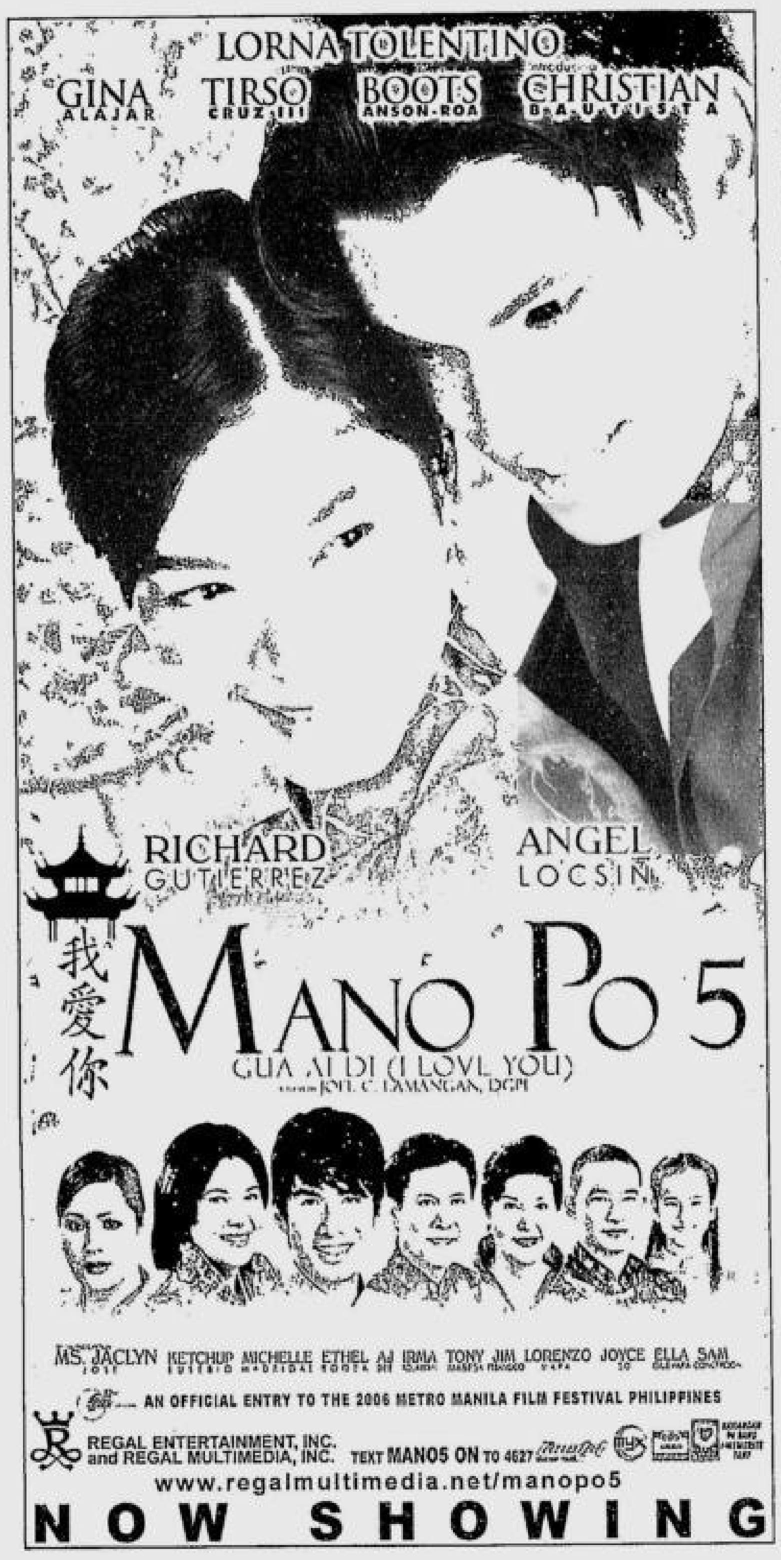
From page E2

Festival (Portugal), among others.

"It's appreciated in festivals abroad. Although it didn't win in Hamburg, the festival director was rooting for it," De la Cruz recounted.

His other film on impoverished children, "Lata at Tsinelas," won Special Mention in the Morbegno Film Festival in Italy last year.

"In my films," he said, "I want to show that you can also be happy even if you are poor, that even in the most desperate of conditions, kids will find the will to live."



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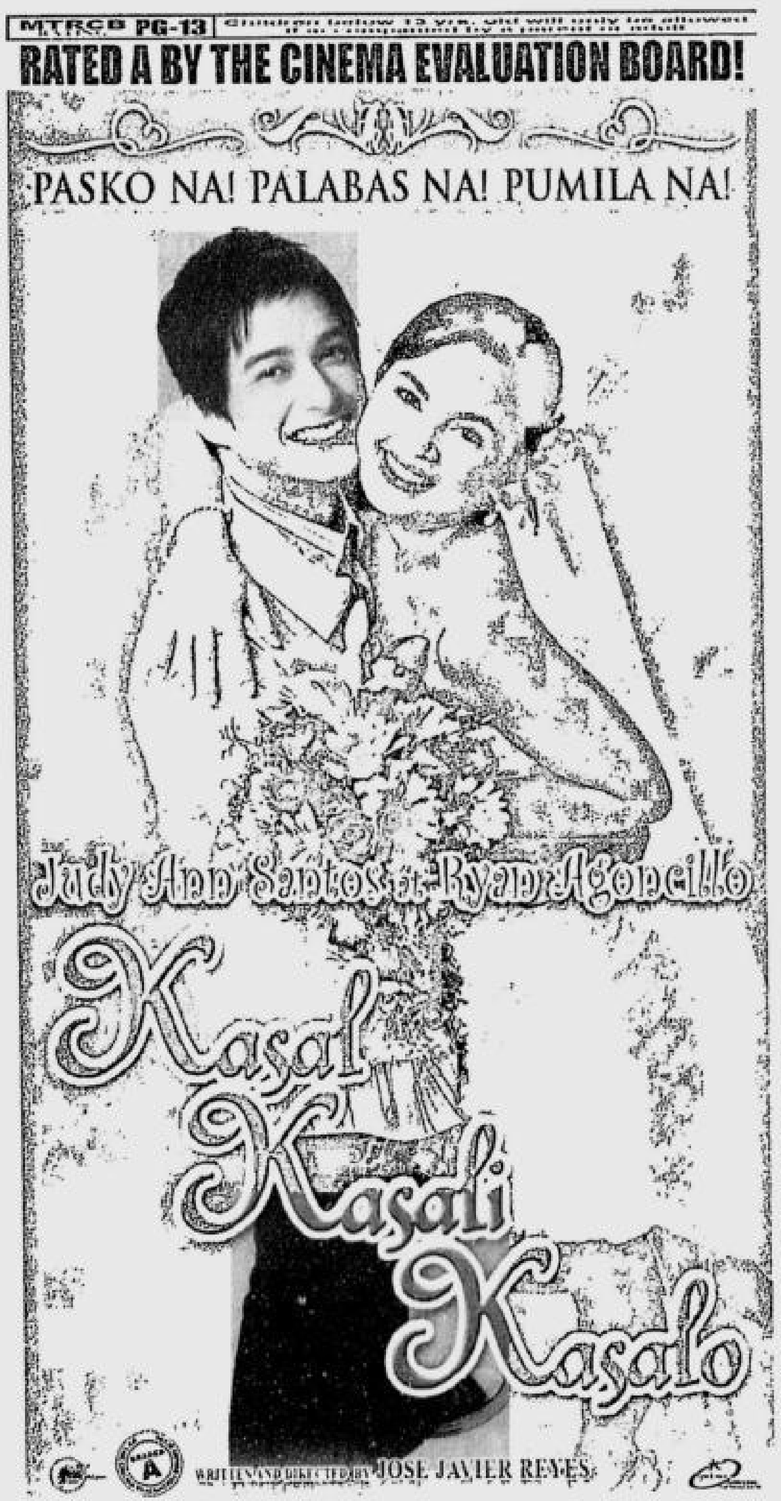

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Judy Ann Santos at Ryan Agoncillo
Kasal Kasali Kasalo
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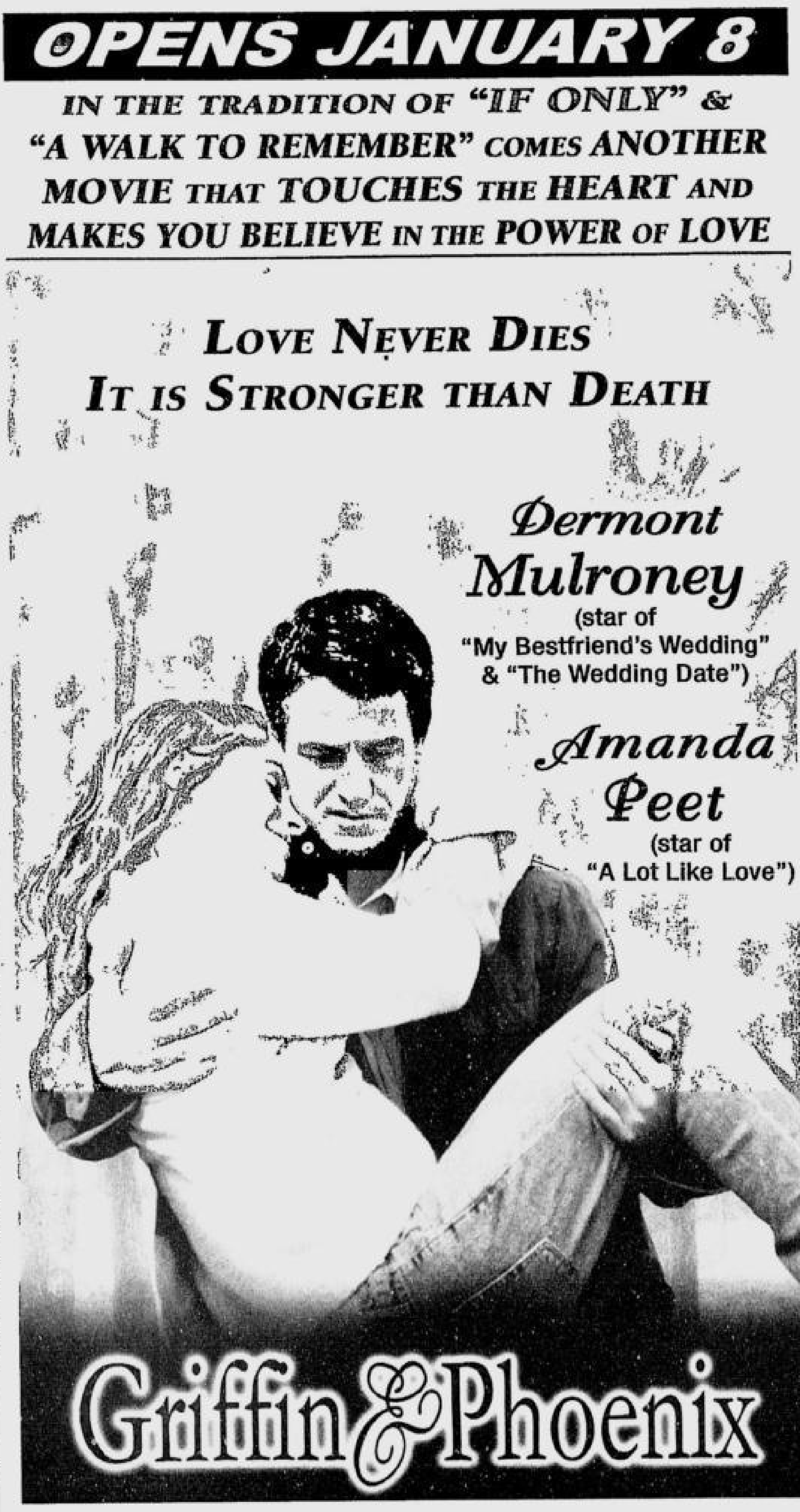

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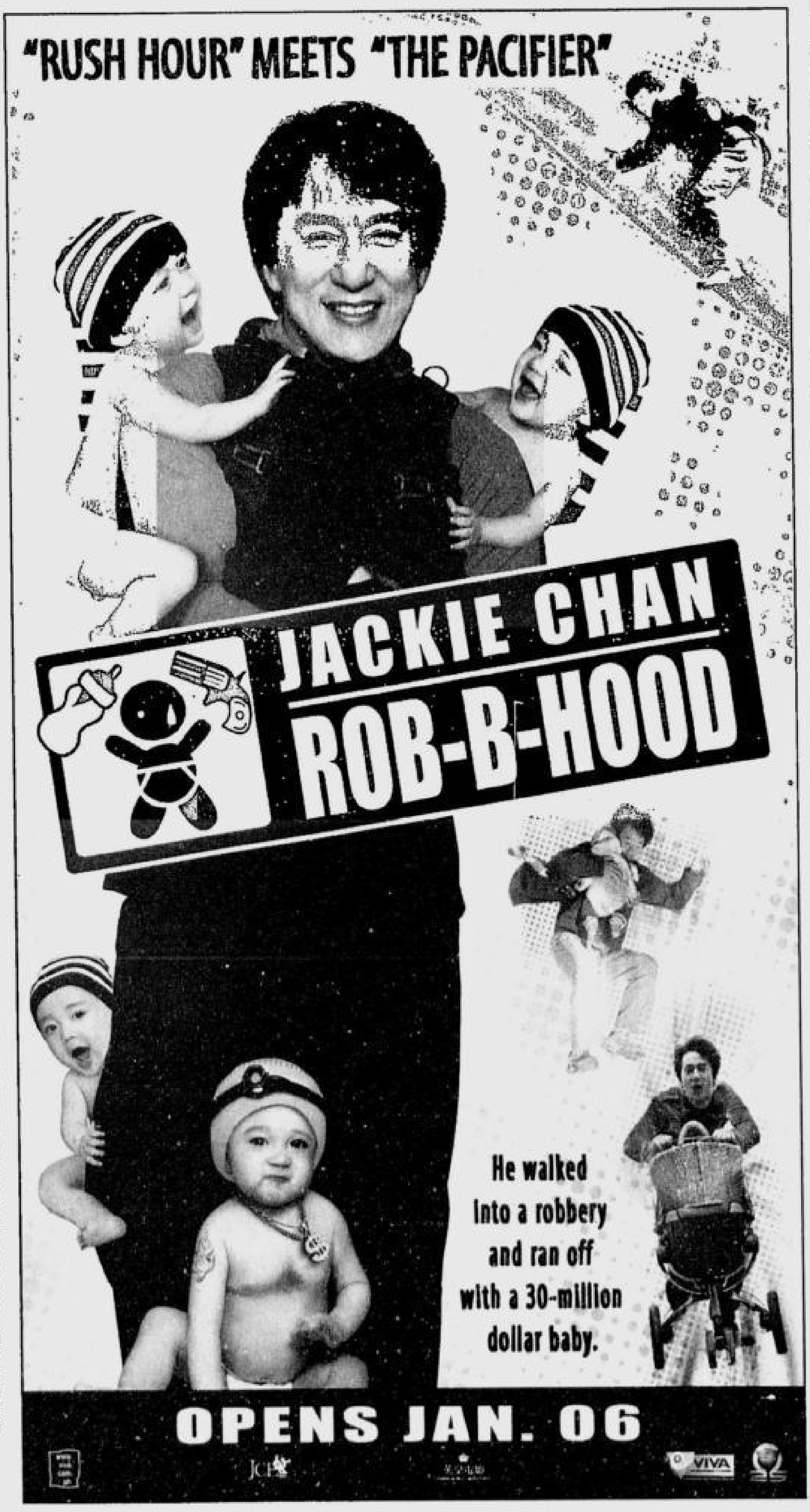

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starmall
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(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266160

3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) MANO PO - 3
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA

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3 MANO PO - 3

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3 RESRVED
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(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 SHAKE, RATTLE, & ROLL - 8
2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 MANO PO - 3
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
6 TATLONG BARAHA
7 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
8 LIGALIG (BATANG MAYNILA)
9 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
10 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3

Blue Wave MARIKINA
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4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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Jade Cinema
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4

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3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL

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2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
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Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736

1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748

1 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
2 SUPER NOYPI

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 TATLONG BARAHA
2 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
3 LIGALIG (BATANG MAYNILA)
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 SHAKE RATTLE 7 ROLL
4 LIGALIG (BATANG MAYNILA)
5 MANO PO - 5

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1 MANO PO - 5
2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 SHAKE RATTLE 7 ROLL

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

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2 LIGALIG (BATANG MAYNILA)

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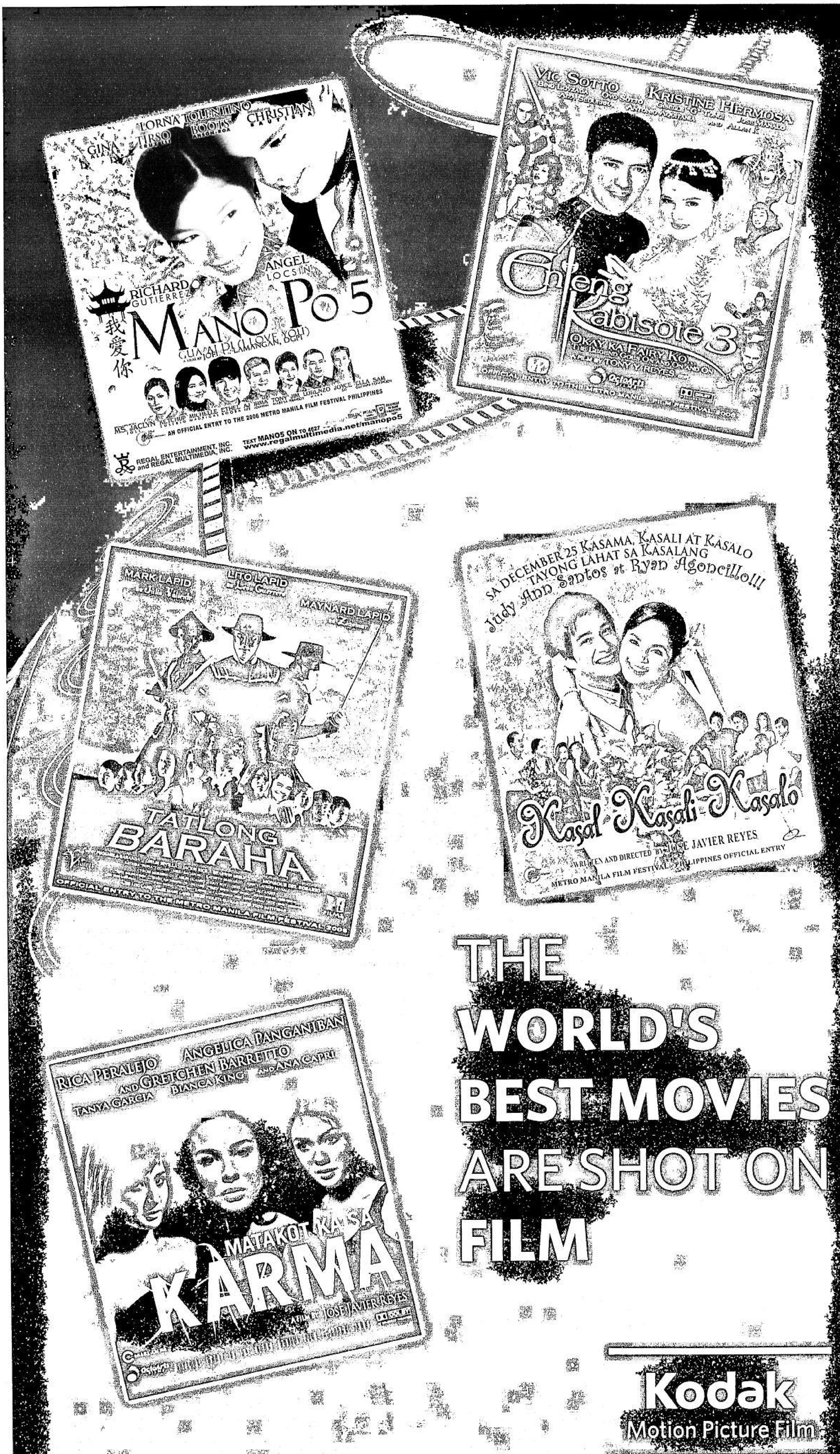
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KRISTINE HERMOSA
Enteng Kabisote 3
OKAY KA FAIRY KO
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MAYNARD LAPID
TATLONG BARAHA
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Judy Ann Santos at Ryan Agoncillo!!!
Kasal Kasali Kasalo
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JOSE JAVIER REYES
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METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

(Inquirer Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival stars today and runs till Jan. 7, 2007.)

Enteng Kabisote 3: The Legend Goes On & On & On

Stars Vic Sotto, Kristine Hermosa, Oyo Boy Sotto, Bing Pimentel, Jose Manalo, Allan K., G. Tongi, Angelica Jones, BJ "Tolits" Forbes

Directed by Tony Y. Reyes

OctoArts/M-Zet's third installment of the Enteng franchise follows the Kabisote family and the Engkantasyans' never-ending battle with evil witch Satana. Shape-shifting alien/lizard Zarkov joins Satana's team and takes over the place of Enteng who gets lost in the fantasy world with Jose. Last year's "Enteng" was the topnotcher at the tills and won for Manalo Best Supporting Actor. This year, director Reyes promises a bigger adventure. "We are introducing new characters," he says. Sotto's co-stars on the noontime show "Eat Bulaga" are making cameo appearances—Joey de Leon, Tito Sotto, Jimmy Santos, Ciara Sotto, Paolo Ballesteros and Vic Sotto's real-life sweetheart Pia Guanio.

Shake, Rattle & Roll 8

Stars Manilyn Reynes, Sheryl Cruz, Keempee de Leon, Iza Calzado, Keanna Reeves, Bearwin Meily, Nash Aguas, Eugene Domingo, IC Mendoza

METRO/ F2

20 left in 'Starstruck' this week

Last week's eliminations felt like 'the end' for some contenders

By Nini Valera

DON PEREZ OF CAGAYAN DE ORO AND AVA Jugueta of Quezon were voted off the list of 38 "Starstruck" hopefuls Monday last week.

Perez, 21, and Jugueta, 17, did not survive the acting challenge posed to them—to recreate scenes from "Bakekang." They were judged by council members Lorna Tolentino, talent manager Douglas Quijano, and TV director Louie Ignacio.

The previous night, contenders to the titles "Ultimate Survivors" (love team), Ultimate Hunk and Ultimate Sweetheart were edged out of the roster of 38 during the reality talent search show's first live elimination round this season.

Before the elimination, Amira Bartell of Sorsogon and Rando Stamatelaky of Paranaque were dropped from the original 40 contenders. Bartell, 18, failed to submit requirements to the contest

20 LEFT/ F3

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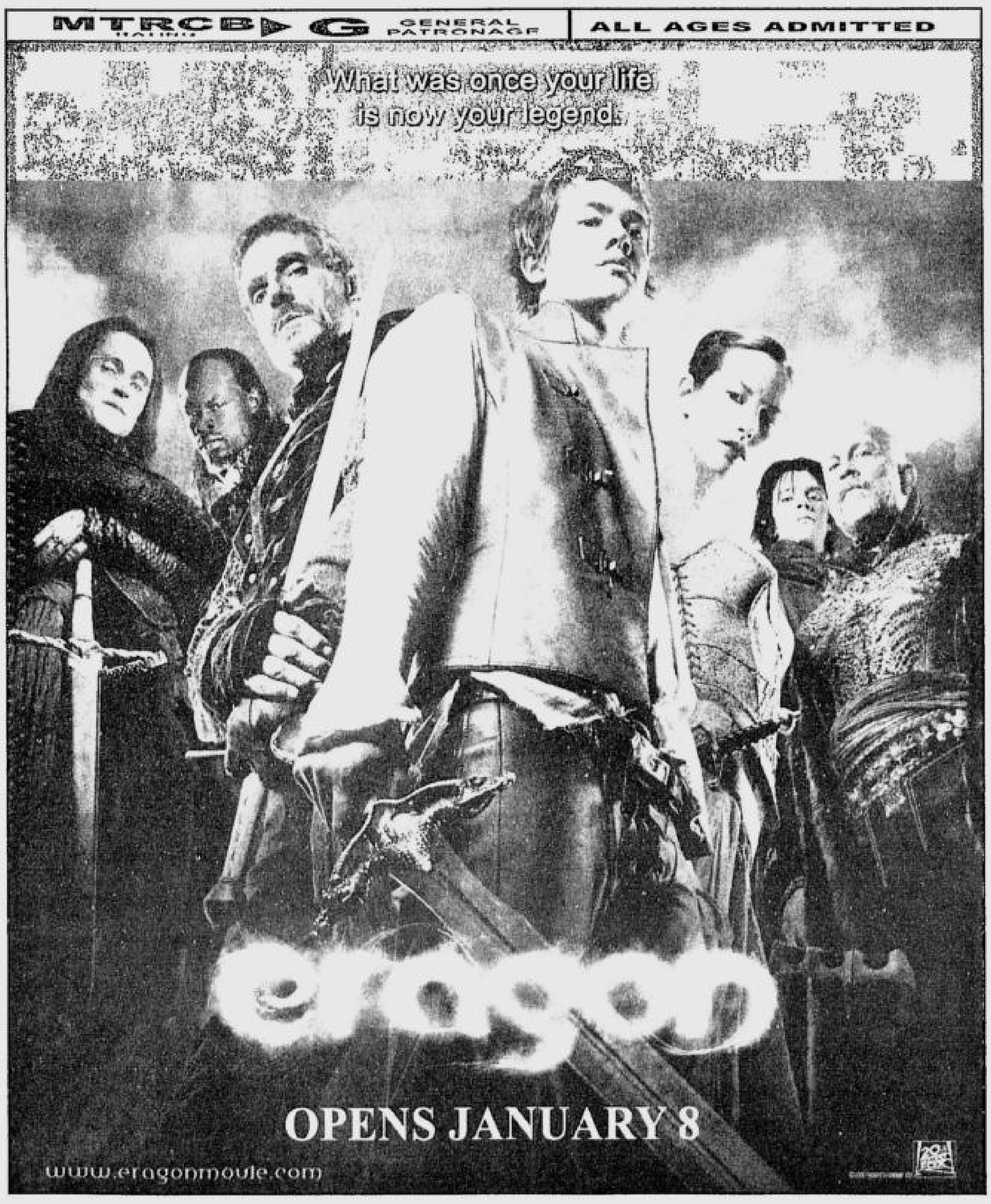

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LIGALIG 11:30 / 1:30 / 3:30 / 5:30 / 7:30 / 9:30	ZSA ZSA ZATURNAH 10.50 / 1:00 / 3.10 / 5:20 / 7.30 / 9.40	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 10:40 / 1:25 / 4:10 / 6:55 / 9:40	
TATLONG BARAHA 12 50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30	MANO PO 5	MATAKOT KA SA KARMA 1:00 / 3:10 / 5.20 / 7:30 / 9 40	RESERVED

Ali MALL 5

KASAL, KASALI, KASALO 12 05 / 2:15 / 4:25 / 6:35 / 8:45	LIGALIG 10:30 / 12:30 / 2:30 / 4:30 / 6:30 / 8:30	ZSA ZSA ZATURNAH 11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35
SUPER NOYPI 11:15 / 1:35 / 3:55 / 6:15 / 8:35	ENTENG KABISOTE 3 11:00 / 1:20 / 3:40 / 6:00 / 8:20	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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8 SUPER NOYPI
9 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
10 SHAKE, RATLLE AND ROLL 8

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5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
7 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8

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6 MANO PO 5
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
8 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8

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4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 TATLONG BARAHA
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
7 LIGALIG
8 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2576

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2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

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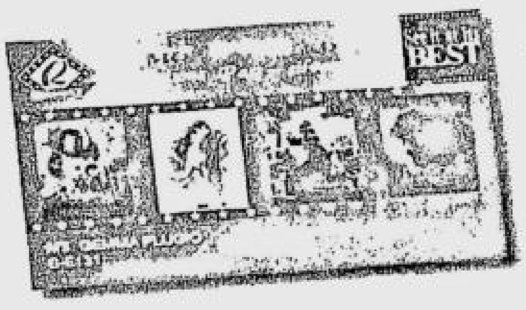

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4 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO

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2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 TATLONG BARAHA
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
5 LIGALIG
6 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO

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3 SUPER NOYPI
4 MANO PO 5
5 LIGALIG
6 KASALI, KASAL, KASALO

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4 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8
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LIGALIG
BARAHA
KARMA
SHAKE RATTLE ROLL 8

ENTENG KABISOTE 3 (OKAY KA FAIRY KO) THE LEGEND GOES ON AND ON AND ON

KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

LIGALIG

MANO PO 5: GUA AI DI (I LOVE YOU)

MATAKOT KA SA KARMA

SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

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5 MANO PO 5
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ENTENG KABISOTE 3
CINEMA 2
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
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2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 MANO PO 5
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 LIGALIG
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
7 TATLONG BARAHA
8 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
9 MANO PO 5
10 SUPER NOYPI
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
12 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 LIGALIG
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 MANO PO 5
5 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
6 TATLONG BARAHA
7 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
8 MANO PO 5
9 SUPER NOYPI
10 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
12 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 LIGALIG
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
4 TATLONG BARAHA
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 MANO PO 5
7 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
8 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
9 MANO PO 5
10 SUPER NOYPI
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
12 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 LIGALIG
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
5 TATLONG BARAHA
6 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
7 MANO PO 5
8 SUPER NOYPI
9 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
10 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488
1 LIGALIG
2 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
3 TATLONG BARAHA
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 MANO PO 5
6 SUPER NOYPI

SM CITY SOUTHMALL 806-6888
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 LIGALIG
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
4 TATLONG BARAHA
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
6 MANO PO 5
7 SUPER NOYPI
8 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 TATLONG BARAHA
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CITY MANILA 523-9240
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 LIGALIG
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 TATLONG BARAHA
6 MANO PO 5
7 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
8 MANO PO 5
9 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
10 SUPER NOYPI
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
12 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

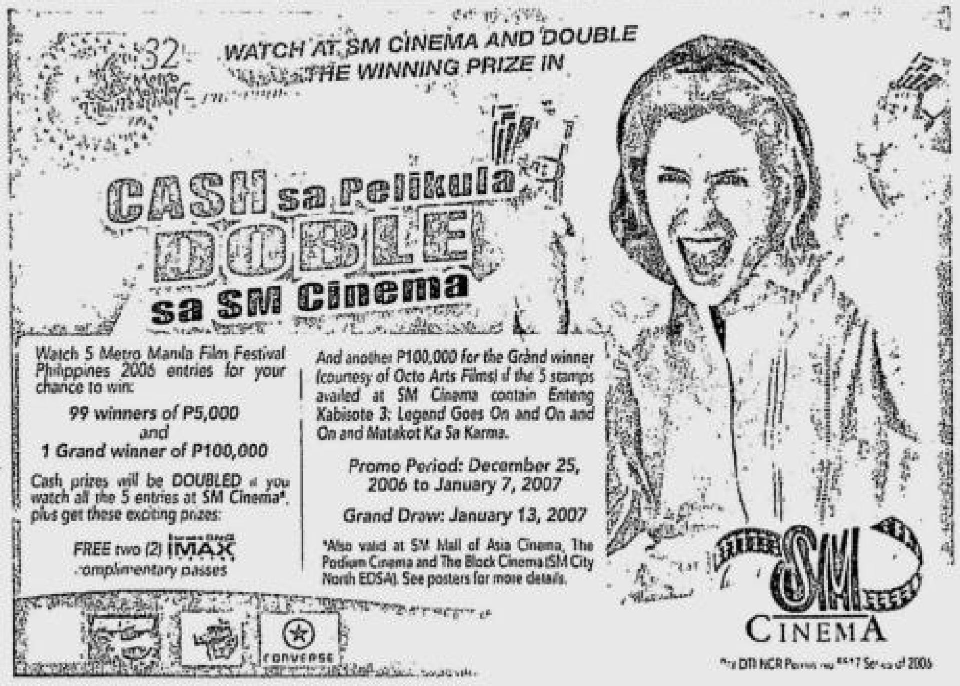
SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323201-04
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 MANO PO 5
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH

SM VALENZUELA 293-3917
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 LIGALIG
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
4 TATLONG BARAHA

SM CITY SUCAT 829-4975
1 LIGALIG
2 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
3 MANO PO 5
4 SUPER NOYPI

movietime PROMO

Watch and Win at SM Cinema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Promo Period: December 25, 2006 to January 7, 2007

Grand Draw: January 13, 2007

*Also valid at SM Mall of Asia Cinema, The Podium Cinema and The Block Cinema (SM City North EDSA). See posters for more details.

Per DTI NCR Permit No. 8417 Series of 2006

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1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
3 TATLONG BARAHA
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 MANO PO 5
6 SUPER NOYPI
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45
1 MANO PO 5
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 SUPER NOYPI
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 TATLONG BARAHA

SM CITY MARILAO (044)9332013-17
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 MANO PO 5

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04
1 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 MANO PO 5

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637681-85
1 SUPER NOYPI
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 TATLONG BARAHA
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
5 LIGALIG
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CIY LIPA (043) 756-7925
1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 TATLONG BARAHA

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MANO PO 5
3 LIGALIG
4 TATLONG BARAHA

SM CITY BAGUIO (074)6197838-39
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 LIGALIG
4 TATLONG BARAHA

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3100
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 SUPER NOYPI
3 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
4 MANO PO 5

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5341205-06
1 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
2 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 MANO PO 5
5 TATLONG BARAHA
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
7 LIGALIG
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 SUPER NOYPI
3 MANO PO 5
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 TATLONG BARAHA
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
7 LIGALIG
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2976998
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
3 TATLONG BARAHA
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 MANO PO 5
6 HAPPY FEET

SM CITY CAGAYAN (088)859-2884
1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
2 MANO PO 5
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3

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*FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MOVIE LISTING, MTRCB RATING, SCREENING SCHEDULES AND THE LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SM CINEMA

ROUNDUP

'Doom' on HBO

Set countless years in the future, "Doom" tells of a group of hardened marines headed by Sarge (Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson) who are sent to a research facility on Mars to destroy a throng of monsters created by an experiment gone awry.

Director Andrzej Bartkowiak joins producers Lorenzo di Bonaventura and John Wells in this adaptation of a video game that electrified a generation.

The sci-fi action adventure airs Jan. 13 at 9 p.m. on HBO.

'War of the Worlds'

A contemporary remake based on HG Well's seminal classic, the sci-fi thriller "War of the Worlds" directed by Steven Spielberg stars Tom Cruise as Ray Ferrier, a divorced dockworker and a less-than-perfect father.

Soon after his ex-wife (Miranda Otto) and her new husband drop off their teenage son Robbie (Justin Chatwin) and young daughter Rachel (Dakota Fanning) for a rare weekend visit, a strange lightning storm touches down, leading to the first alien attack on Earth.

The movie premieres Jan. 27, 9 p.m. on HBO.

METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

From page F1

Directed by Rahyan Carlos, Topel Lee, Mike Tuviera

The eighth edition of this film fest staple gathers three young filmmakers tackling an episode each of the horror trilogy: The 13th floor of a condo building is haunted by ghosts of orphans who perished in a fire; an *aswang* works as a *yaya* in the suburbs and victimizes an OFW's family; an LRT is diverted and its hapless passengers hunted one by one by a hungry monster. Graded B by the Cinema Evaluation Board, this urban scream fest was given a fresh, vibrant and sleek look by its youthful directors, according to Regal executive producer Lily Monteverde. "It's not like earlier 'Shake' movies. It's entirely new and exciting. These young directors gave it a different treatment."

FEMALE HOPEFULS. Fifteen out of "Starstruck's" final 30 (from top, left to right): Steff Prescott, Lizzie Pecson, Lyka Ayuste, Jewel Mische, Kris Bernal, Rich Asuncion, Ayin Solomon, Jem Estrada, Hazel Uy, Chariz Solomon, Jean De Castro, Nica Escandor, Rox Beldua, Ava Jugueta and Jesi Corcuera.

20 left in 'Starstruck' this week

From page F1

organizers, and Stamatelaky was found to be older than his declared age of 21 after a copy of his original birth certificate surfaced.

This year, the search has been expanded to contestants aged 15 to 21. In the past, the age limit was 18.

"I will be the most hated person tonight," declared host Raymond Gutierrez off-cam shortly before he read the list of casualties in last week's show-off round.

The "Starstruck" hopefuls performed for 30 seconds—either a song or a dance number of his or her choice. But no one attacked Raymond that night. Backstage after the telecast, most of the cast-offs went straight to the restrooms to mourn their early demise from the show in private.

Farina Runkle, 17, who drew public attention after pictures of herself and Gerald Anderson kissing each other were published, was nowhere to be found.

Tycoon Carreon, 17, of Iloilo, told INQUIRER Entertainment that he had a feeling he would be booted out that night. "I knew it would happen," he said calmly. "Right now, all I'm thinking of is quitting show biz."

He said he had given his best to his dance number and could only surmise that he was voted off because he was caught smoking. "I should have known better," he said. "I should not have smoked in public. We're supposed to be role models."

Looking lost and alone, Ann Tan, another cast-off, walked aimlessly at the parking lot of Broadway Centrum, where the elimination round was telecast live. Aldrin Gonzales, 21, another fallen contestant, waited patiently for a ride home. "I guess it's the end for me," Gonzales told INQUIRER Entertainment.

But for Ayin Solomon of Nueva Ecija, the journey to stardom was just beginning. Standing out in her native *baro't saya*, Solomon, 20, performed a native folk dance, "Pandanggo sa Ilaw."

"[I think I proved that] I had the courage to do a native dance in front of a crowd used to hip-hop and other modern dances," Solomon explained. "We should not be ashamed of our culture. We should showcase it. *'Di ba parang* Miss Tourism?"

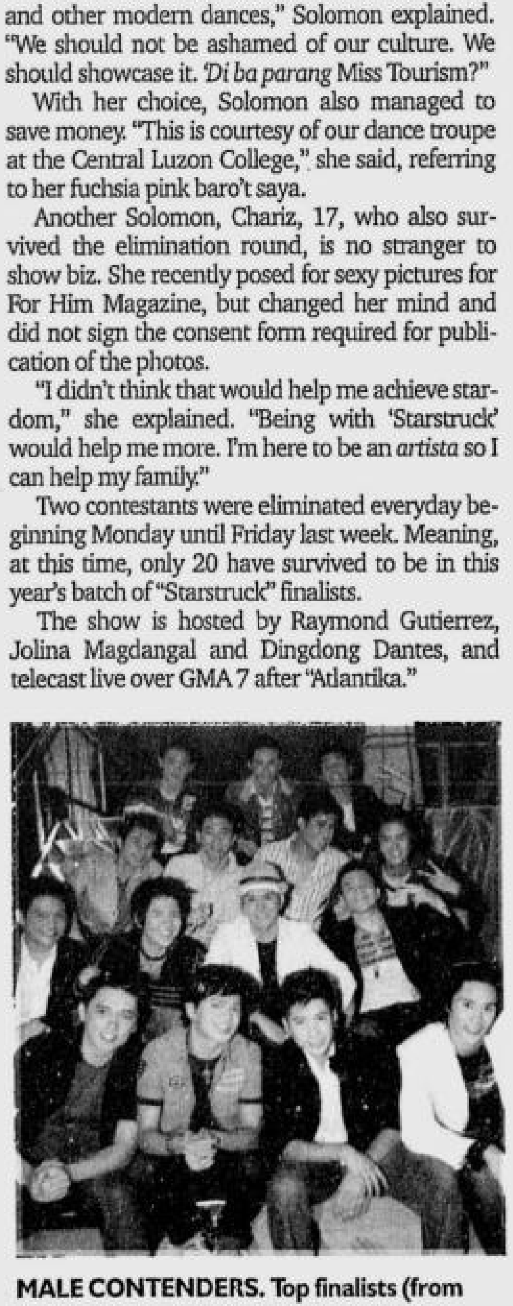
With her choice, Solomon also managed to save money. "This is courtesy of our dance troupe at the Central Luzon College," she said, referring to her fuchsia pink baro't saya.

Another Solomon, Chariz, 17, who also survived the elimination round, is no stranger to show biz. She recently posed for sexy pictures for For Him Magazine, but changed her mind and did not sign the consent form required for publication of the photos.

"I didn't think that would help me achieve stardom," she explained. "Being with 'Starstruck' would help me more. I'm here to be an *artista* so I can help my family."

Two contestants were eliminated everyday beginning Monday until Friday last week. Meaning, at this time, only 20 have survived to be in this year's batch of "Starstruck" finalists.

The show is hosted by Raymond Gutierrez, Jolina Magdangal and Dingdong Dantes, and telecast live over GMA 7 after "Atlantika."



MALE CONTENDERS. Top finalists (from top, left to right) Mart Escudero, Prince Stefan, Lui Perez, Dex Quindoza, Jan Manual, Dave Valentino, Kyle Esguerra, Ruji Fortuna, Paulo Avelino, Drey Peñol, Kiko Junio, Jake Baste, Don Perez, Aljur Abrenica and Chad Burden.

Chinese crew wows Norton

HONG KONG—AMERICAN ACTOR EDWARD Norton says he was impressed with the professionalism of Chinese movie crews when he made "The Painted Veil" in China.

"I've [worked in] some other countries where... the local film crews are not so experienced, but here the Chinese film crews are very, very professional...[they] really know what they're doing," Norton said in an interview with the Chinese news Web site Sina.com.

"The Painted Veil," also featuring Naomi Watts, Chinese actor Xia Yu and Hong Kong's Anthony Wong, is about a love triangle in 1920s China adapted from a W. Somerset Maugham novel. The movie is now showing in the US and China.

Norton said he also admired the ability of Xia and Wong to juggle Chinese and English dialogue. "I was very impressed by Anthony (Wong) and Xia Yu both working in two languages. I thought it was amazing," he said.

AP

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Per DOH-BFAD Permit Nos. 0092 and 1082 Series of 2006

Playhouse Disney Christmas specials

KID FIT

PLAYHOUSE DISNEY CHANNEL STARTS ITS Christmas offering with Barney and friends specials—"Barney's Movin' and Groovin'," "Barney's Colorful World Live!" and "Barney's Land of Make Believe"—at 6 a.m. today.

On "Noddy Saves Christmas" at 9 a.m., Noddy goes on a whirlwind adventure to fix the magic clock that stops time all over the world, so Santa can deliver presents.

At 9:30 a.m., the "Mickey Mouse Clubhouse" episode "Mickey Saves Santa" finds Mickey getting the surprise of the holidays when Dasher the reindeer shows up at the Clubhouse with a note from Santa: His sleigh has broken down at the top of Mistletoe Mountain.

Other shows are: "Fun Song Factory," "Disney's Little Einsteins" and "Wiggle Boy and Madeleine," 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.; "William Joyce's Rolie Olie Polie," 1:30 p.m.; "Whoo Hoo! Wiggly Gremlins," 2:30 p.m.; "Fun Song Factory," 3:30 p.m.; and "Disney's Little Einsteins," 6 p.m.

"NODDY Saves Christmas"

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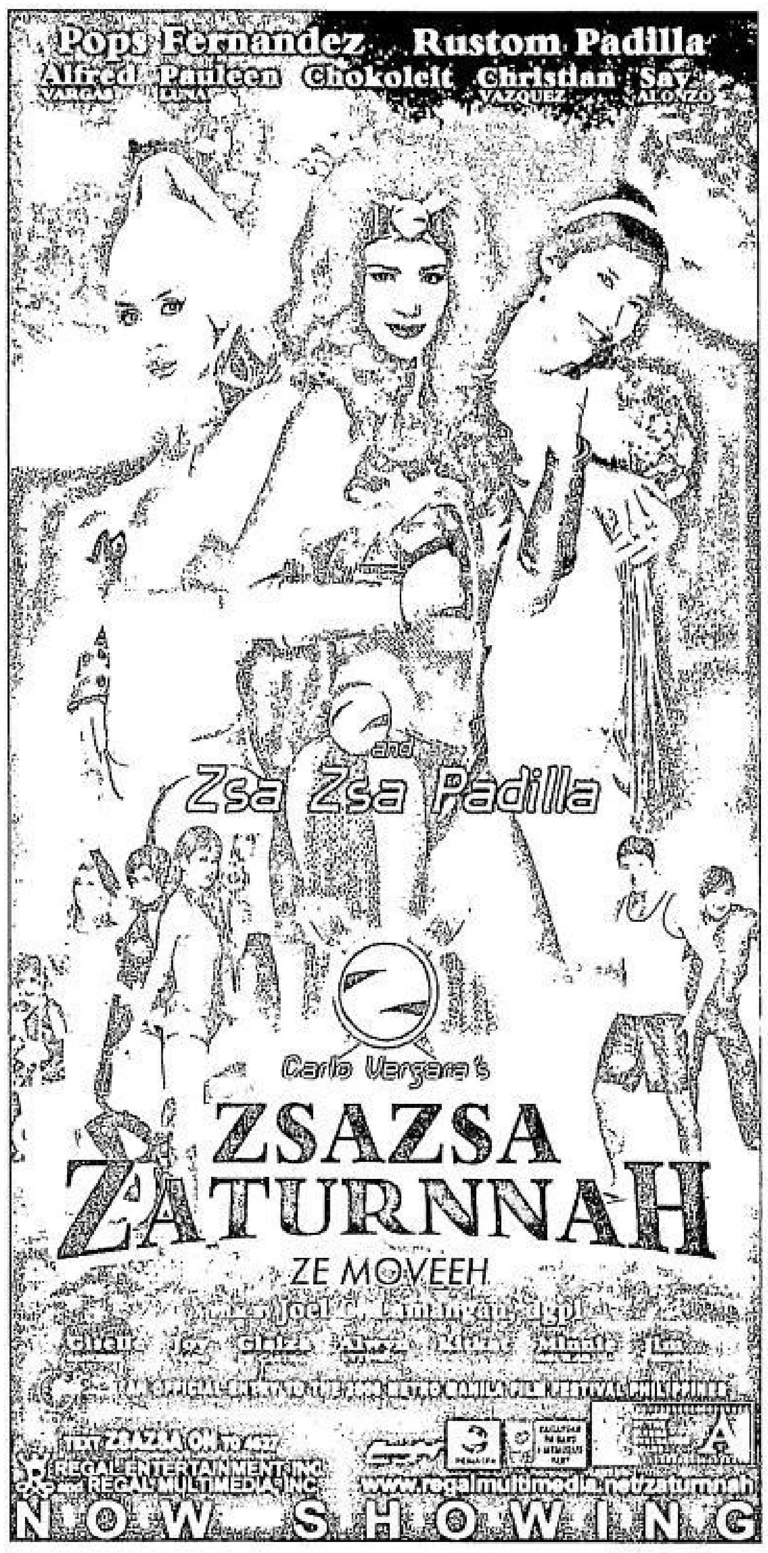
Pops Fernandez
Rustom Padilla
Alfred Vargas
Pauleen Luna
Chokoleit
Christian Vazquez
Say Alonzo
and Zsa Zsa Padilla
Carlo Vergara's
ZSAZSA ZATURNNAH
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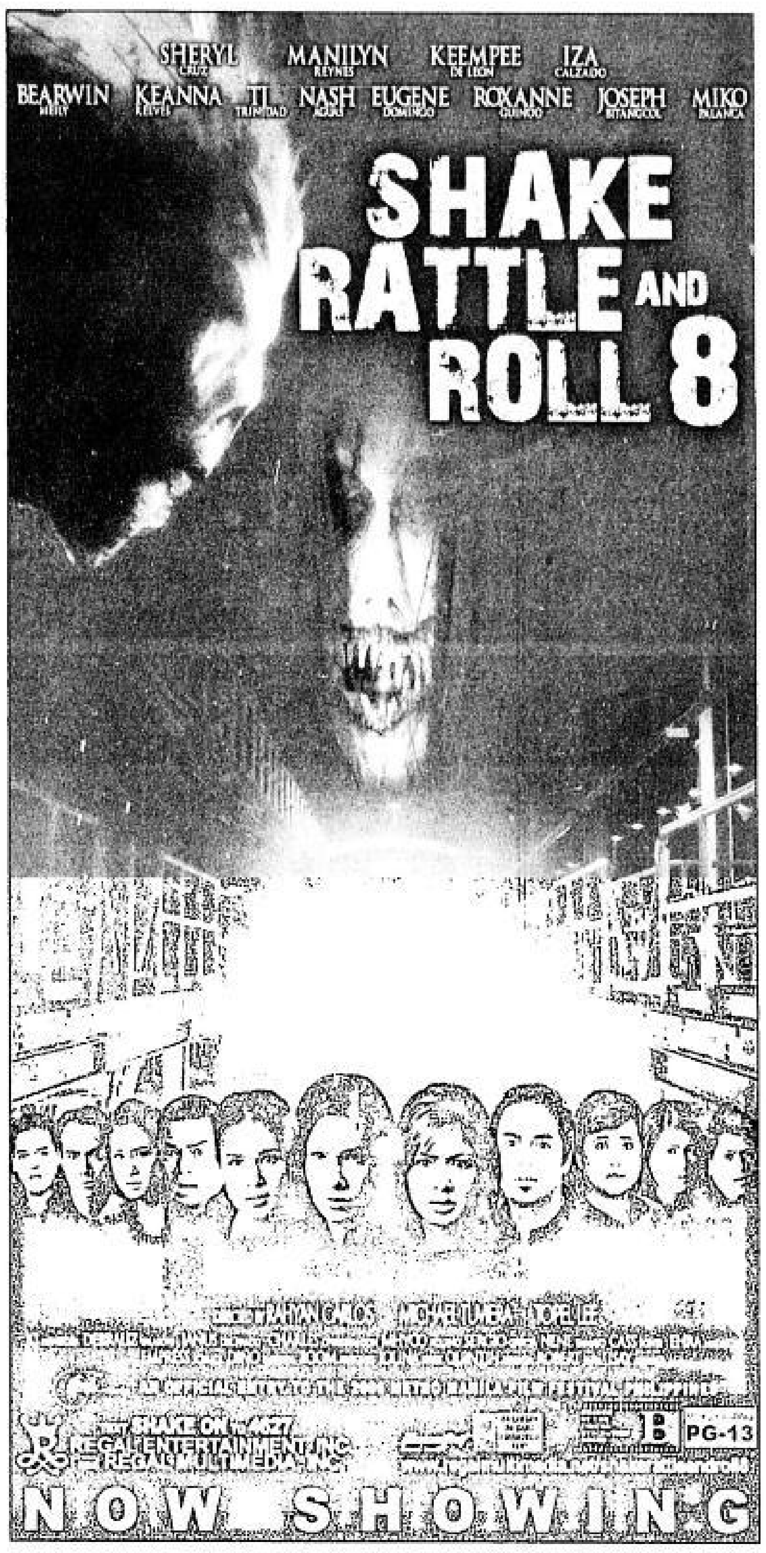
SHERYL CRUZ
MANILYN REYNES
KEEMPEE DE LEON
IZA CALZADO
BEARWIN MEILY
KEANNA REEVES
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Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification, please call 729 7777

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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	4 LIGALIG
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	2 LIGALIG	3 THX TATLONG BARAHA GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA	5 MANO PO 5	6 SUPER NOYPI	7 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX SUPER NOYPI GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX MANO PO 5 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA GUARANTEED SEATS	4 TATLONG BARAHA GUARANTEED SEATS	5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX MATAKOT KA SA KARMA GUARANTEED SEATS	2 MANO PO 5		
	3 SUPER NOYPI	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 SUPER NOYPI	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8	3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3		
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